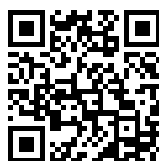

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THE
BOOK OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

THE
BOOK OF ILLUSTRATIONS;
OR,
SCRIPTURE TRUTHS EXHIBITED
BY THE AID OF SIMILES.

ORIGINAL AND SELECTED.

BY
THE REV. H. C. SALTER, A.M.
CURATE AND LECTURER OF GLASTONBURY.

AND WITHOUT A PARABLE SPAKE HE NOT UNTO THEM.—MATT. xiii. 34.



LONDON:
J. HATCHARD AND SON, 187, PICCADILLY.

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1037.

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TO
THE VENERABLE
HENRY LAW, A.M.
ARCHDEACON OF WELLS, &c.
THIS VOLUME
IS, BY PERMISSION, DEDICATED,
WITH SINCERE RESPECT AND ESTEEM,
BY
THE AUTHOR.

P R E F A C E.

WHILE preparing this volume, I was apprised of the existence of an old work on the subject.* With great difficulty a copy was at length procured; and unwilling that this attempt in a new department of Theology should be abandoned, I determined to make it the basis of the work which I had designed.

That a subject so useful and interesting as that of Illustration by Similes should not have been cultivated, may excite surprise. It appears indeed to be altogether new ground which has not been broken up, while it presents an ample field in which to expatiate. Two reasons may be assigned, which may partly explain why it has been neglected. The first is the difficulty of supplying a sufficient number for publication. But I apprehend a more probable one may be found in the nature of the subject. The author must feel that he is entering on an untrodden path. And this requires no small degree of moral courage. It is safer to follow others. The fact that the public are not in posses-

* KAINA KAI ΠΑΛΑΙΑ. Things New and Old, or a Storehouse of Similes, Sentences, Allegories, Apothegms, Adages, Divine, Moral, Political, &c., with their several applications: collected, and observed, from the writings and sayings of the learned in all ages to the present. By John Spencer, a lover of learning and learned men. London, 1658.

sion of some work of this nature, would discourage most men ; and the inquiry *why it was so* would present an obstacle at the beginning. But the request of some eminent in judgment to publish on the subject, which originated the idea, strengthened by the unanimous approval of those whom I consulted, overcame my hesitation. Indeed the desire to possess a full collection of Illustrations I found was very general with the clergy to whom it was mentioned.

But another, and a greater discouragement will be found in the subject matter. Its materials cannot be subjected to the just decisions of Reason, but the capricious judge to be appealed to is Taste. Whether any particular illustration should be admitted or rejected, can hardly be decided by reason. There are no fixed principles to try it by ; it will be liked or disliked often without any assignable grounds. As our tastes and fancies vary, so will be our approval or otherwise. So various is the character of men's minds, that it would be impossible to obtain an uniform judgment. Some illustrations of singular point and beauty might secure universal approval. But this excellence cannot be expected to belong to illustrations in general, any more than to other subjects. Here, then, we must surrender at discretion to the *taste* of our judge. In general the standard of Taste has been tolerably adjusted. Here it is otherwise.

That it is a subject deserving of cultivation will, I think, appear, if we consider its usefulness with reference to the aid which it affords the public teacher.

1. Illustrations amuse, and interest, and relieve the style of preaching. Dulness and unprofitableness may well be joined together. It is in vain to hope for much good where no interest is excited. And when the difficulties attending this are considered, it surely cannot be a question whether every legitimate means should not be adopted for this end. The manner in which the great subjects of our religion may be enforced, can never be a matter of indifference. And it may be safely affirmed generally—that the most successful

preachers have been, for the most part, the most popular. Which is evidently agreeable to the reason of things, and the constitution of man. The powers which profit must first interest and engage. But to excite and maintain a due interest in our message is, under the present system, an attainment of no small difficulty, and is found so even by those who are conscious of the highest qualifications. Surely it should be a matter of regret to a tender conscience that there should be one hearer who was uninterested and indifferent when such momentous results are at stake. And *with what a pressure should it bear upon our hearts* that many such, it is feared, may be found in every assembly! Why indifference should so prevail, is partly explained by the existing circumstances under which the Gospel is preached. The interest which attaches to other lectures is mainly derived from the novelty, and the great diversity of topics which they embrace. They are not the subjects of every day. But this advantage must be candidly admitted to be wanting to the preacher. Notwithstanding the beautiful diversity of metaphor and imagery, by which the subject may be enforced by a skilful expounder, yet after all it reduces itself to two heads, "repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ." Thus, while it is true that the Gospel is as much a remembrancer as a teacher of new ideas, and will be valued as such by the truly spiritual, yet it is requiring too much from the general hearers to expect that they will be impressed by an oft-repeated message which is destitute of some interest. Moreover, as religious knowledge is happily more extensively diffused, this difficulty will be increased; and as the attainments of the people increase, so the preacher must continue to rise above the level of his hearers. In a word, dull preaching is the bane of success. In this view illustrations are of importance. The effect is that which Wharton has remarked respecting the moral passages in Dyer's poetry—that "the unexpected insertion of such reflections imparts to us the same pleasure which

we feel, when, in wandering through a wilderness, or grove, we suddenly behold in the turning of the walk a statue of some virtue or muse."

2. They arrest attention. Whoever has used them must have seen this effect produced generally on the hearers.

3. They will often elucidate, and fix a truth upon the mind which would never have been understood; or, if understood, would not have been impressed by an ordinary statement. They will therefore be remembered long after every other part of the discourse has been forgotten, and will assist in recalling the topic with which it is connected.

4. But their benefit in lecturing and catechising young persons can scarcely be sufficiently appreciated. The difficulty of fixing the attention and retaining it afterwards, is felt by all who engage in these interesting exercises, and there are greater failures here than in adult teaching. It has been well stated in a practical work on education, "That it is one of the highest efforts of genius to teach children."* Here illustration will afford powerful aid. With the advantage of interest it presents the idea twice over, and will succeed with the understanding and memory when mere didactic teaching will fail.

An illustration is a moral painting on which the imagination has been employed; and it has the advantage over the simple annunciation of a truth, that it appeals to both the faculties—the reason and imagination. Like the painting on the canvass, which, while it charms the eye, also interests the mind—or like the incense which flamed on Jewish altar, which arrested the eye with its cloudy pillar, while it regaled the senses with its fragrance.

We hear much of "the dignity of the pulpit;" and in following out this view it is to be feared that much which would be profitable, and what would often seem to be neces-

* Hints for conducting Sunday Schools, &c., compiled by the Committee of the Sunday School Society for Ireland. 1836.

sary, is excluded. But surely a return to more of common sense, and greater attention to the principles by which human nature is guided, would answer our purpose much better. If, by guarding the dignity of the pulpit, we are to understand the rejection of whatever degrades the character of the message, or the messenger of the Lord of Hosts, all must submit to it. But if the necessity of sustaining an elevated style is pleaded for as essential to its true dignity—if what is familiar, but not trifling—homely, but not coarse—in a word, if the dialects in which nature is wont to express herself are to be excluded,—surely this should be resisted as an aggression on common sense.

It should seem that the preacher, if he would proceed on correct principles, must place himself in the condition of his hearers. His own mind is individual, the minds which are to be acted upon are many and various. He may be open only to certain impressions; his hearers, on the contrary, from the multiform mind which they present, are susceptible of every variety of impulse, and every tone of feeling. Whatever falls within the range of their minds, and tastes, is that which is suited to them. Refinement would often be obscurity, and scholastic precision unprofitable labour. To follow our own taste, merely, would in many instances be overlooking that of others. It is the exact adaptation to the taste and feelings of the people, which often gives the itinerant preacher an evident superiority over the regular minister: not haunted with the fear of sinning against taste, he fearlessly introduces what will reach men's bosoms, and succeeds. It is not meant to advocate his coarseness and faults, but the necessity of a more popular and familiar address than generally prevails. This is the secret of the acceptableness of good extempore preaching—it goes hand in hand with nature, and the want of this will account for the unimpressiveness of so many, otherwise, able compositions. In our discourses, it is to be feared, we too often resemble one who glides over a sheet of ice where no marks are impressed or

left, and forget that the ice must be penetrated before we can reach the warm springs of feeling which lie in its inner depths. Well has Newton observed, "The force of what we deliver from the pulpit is often lost by a starched, and what we frequently call a correct style, and especially by adding meretricious ornaments. I called upon a lady who had been robbed, and who gave me a striking account of the fact; but had she put it into heroics, I should neither so well have understood her, nor been so well convinced that she had been robbed."

Let me introduce two or three witnesses in support of what has been advanced. George Herbert recommends "the study of physic, and of herbs, while in the way of practice, as also by way of illustration, even as our Saviour made plants and seeds to teach the people; for he is the true householder who bringeth out of his treasury things new and old—the old things of philosophy, and the new of grace, and maketh the one to serve the other." Again he says, "They say it is an ill mason that refuseth any stone, and there is no knowledge but in a skilful hand serves either positively as it is, or else to illustrate some other knowledge. He condescends even to the knowledge of tillage and pasturage, and makes great use of them in teaching, because people by what they understand are best led to what they understand not." Again, "Sometimes he tells them stories, and sayings of others, according as his texts invite him, for these also men heed, and remember better than exhortations, which though earnest, yet often die with the sermon, especially with country people who are thick and heavy, and hard to raise to a point of zeal and fervency, and need a mountain of fire to kindle them, but stories and sayings they will remember."

The philosophic Knox* refers to Hannah More's recommendation of this manner of instruction as follows:—"I am

* Remains, iii. 171.

ready to think he (John Wesley) came nearer your own most excellent idea than any other person whose writings I have seen. When you advise 'instructions to be communicated, and in a way that shall interest the feelings by lively images,' and when you observe that 'there seems to be no good reason why religion must be dry and uninteresting, while every other thing is to be made amusing;' and ask, 'why should not the most entertaining powers of the human mind be supremely consecrated to that subject which is most worthy of their full exercise?'—I read that of which, I must say, John Wesley gives me the most entire exemplification I have ever met with, except in the Bible."

He afterwards says of Mr. Wesley, "I know not where the path of strict religion is so uniformly strewn with flowers, classical beauty, strokes of innocent pleasantry, lively observations on common life, allusions to historic facts and characters, ancient and modern: whatever things, in fact, could be resorted to for amusement by a pure and elevated mind, appear here without the least diminution of their native cheerfulness in the train and service of evangelical piety."

I have so far considered the use of illustration to aid in instruction. Its utility must be obvious for private use. For where shall we find truths so condensed, so strikingly exhibited, as when illustrated by a similitude, or an historical reference? Still, it must be read with comparative disadvantage, with merely a brief application connected with it. It is when embodied with an argument that we are most sensible of its force. And if this is remembered, the work will be read with candour, and more than its design will not be looked for.

But what is man—and what is even the ministry, though divinely appointed, if not maintained continually by the inspiration of the Almighty? While we adore the sovereignty of God, and meekly bow in reverence before the divine announcement that "the Spirit bloweth where it listeth"—

it is yet a most blessed truth that ours is "the ministration of the Spirit." *Here* is our stay and support; and while we summon every energy which flesh and blood can supply for the work, let us look up more and more for the promised Spirit—for "now, Lord, what wait we for? Our hope is in thee."

I am aware that this is but a feeble attempt to awaken an interest in the use of illustrations. It is greatly to be desired that some gifted with the noble faculty of imagination would employ it in the illustration of christian experience, and of the momentous truths of the Gospel. Here Genius, while picturing the truths of God in imperishable colours, would be acting in her noblest and truest sphere.

The illustrations selected from Spencer have undergone free alteration, which was indispensable; they form a small collection of themselves: I have attached his name to them. And a few selected from living authors have been mostly acknowledged. With regard to others this was impossible; partly because some of them had been transferred to a common place book without the name of the authors, but principally because I have exercised the liberty of altering them in every possible way, sometimes by amplifying the figure, altering its form, or applying it to some other topic; at times expanding the application, or abridging it; and often its character has been totally changed, so that in either case the author of the original figure could be no longer made accountable for it. Indeed it would be often difficult to fix on the original author of the similitude, and I am surprised how the writers of one century have quietly copied them from the writers of the preceding one. The principal authors who have supplied materials for illustration are our good old divines. I would particularize Bishops Jeremy Taylor, Leighton, Reynolds, and Hopkins; and Baxter, Owen, Manton, Howe, Flavel, Charnock, Bates, Gurnall, Toplady, &c. A large proportion of them are original, and have been made in the exercise of my ministry. There are

few that might not be worked out to greater advantage, but this would have called for the uninterrupted leisure of many years, and something should be left for the taste and ingenuity of those who use them. In such a work there could be no limit to improvement. Usefulness has been consulted; a finished accuracy was no part of the plan proposed. Men of a severe and fastidious taste may turn aside from some illustrations as too homely, but experience will teach them, if they will condescend to the trial, that these form the most valuable part of the work. Others may be deemed too simple, but he who presided at the celebrated discussion at Downside,* in introducing a *simple* illustration, made that just distinction which places *them* in the rank to which they are entitled. "Suffer me (he observed) to offer you a child-like, but not, I hope, a childish illustration of my meaning." Yet every taste, I believe, may here find something that is appropriate, "from grave to gay, from lively to severe."

* Edwin J. Caulfield, Esq.

Glastonbury, Dec. 1, 1839.

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LIBER SIMILITUDINUM.

Afflictions.

No wonder that our estates and conditions are so variable, like the face of the heavens or the sea ; or like weather which is now fair, and presently again foul ; or like the hard winter, which, for one fair sunshine day, hath oftentimes ten foul. God sees that it is very good for us ; for, as seeds that are deepest covered with snow in winter flourish most in spring ; or as the wind by beating down the flame raiseth it higher and hotter ; and as when we would have fires flame the more we sprinkle water upon them ; even so, when the Lord would increase our joy and thankfulness, he allays it with the tears of affliction. Misery sweeteneth joy ; yea, the sorrows of this life shall (like a dark veil) give a lustre to the glory of the next : then the Lord shall turn this water of our earthly afflictions into that wine of gladness wherewith our souls shall be satiate for ever.

If we were convinced more of the depravity of our hearts, we should be more resigned to chastisement. Affliction's rods are made of many keen twigs, but they are all cut from *the tree of life*. It is great mercy to have a bitter put into that draught which Satan has sweetened as a vehicle for his poison.

I think it worth preserving, that the outpouring of God's Spirit was uncommonly great during the whole time of the plague. Such spiritual consolations, and such communion with God, were seldom experienced, as were felt and enjoyed

by the Lord's people, from the commencement to the cessation of that tremendous visitation. So that the time of destruction was, in another respect, a time of peculiar and most transcendent refreshing to the church of Christ.

We do not feel the solar heat during winter; though, in reality, we are less remote from the great material source of light and warmth, than at those times when its influence is more sensibly enjoyed. The believer, too, has his winter seasons of providential affliction, and of spiritual distress. At such periods, his views are occasionally dark, and his comforts liable to a temporary chill. Yet, if the God of love is ever peculiarly near to his people for good, it is when "his arrows stick fast in them, and when his hand presseth them sore." Behold, "God is in this place, and I knew it not;" was the retrospective experience of Jacob. While the spiritual winter lasts, be it thy endeavour to exercise, what a late excellent person terms, "The winter graces of faith and patience." "At the time appointed, thy consolations shall return, as the clear shining after rain; and thy joy be as the sun, when it goeth forth in its might."

If you thoroughly exhaust a vessel of the air it contains, the pressure of the air on the outside will break that vessel into (perhaps) millions of pieces; because there is not a sufficiency of air within to resist and counteract the weight of the atmosphere from without. A person who is exercised by severe affliction, and who does not experience the divine comforts and supports in his soul, resembles the exhausted receiver above described; and it is no wonder if he yields, and is broken to shivers, under the weight of God's providential hand. But, affliction to one who is sustained by the Holy Ghost, resembles the aerial pressure on the outer surface of an unexhausted vessel. There is that within which supports it, and which preserves it from being destroyed by the incumbent pressure from without.

In a long sunshine of outward prosperity, the dust of our inward corruptions is apt to fly about, and lift itself up. Sanctified affliction, like seasonable rain, lays the dust, and softens the soul, and keeps us from carrying our heads too high.

The earth must be ploughed, and sown, and harrowed, and weeded, and endure many frosty nights, and scorching days, in order to its being made and preserved fruitful. Gentle showers, soft dews, and moderate sunshine, will not suffice always. So it is with the soul of a fruitful Christian.

It is known that a full wind behind the ship drives her not so fast forward as a side-wind, that seems almost as much against her as with her; and the reason, they say, is because a full wind fills but some of her sails, which keeps it from the rest, that they are empty; when a side-wind fills all her sails, and sets her speedily forward. Whichever way we go in this world, our affections are our sails, and according as they are spread and filled so we pass on swifter or slower, whither we are steering. Now, if the Lord should give us a full wind, and continued gales of mercies, it would fill but some of our sails—some of our affections—joy, delight, and the like. But when he comes with a side-wind, a dispensation that seems almost as much against us as for us, then he fills all our sails, takes up all our affections, making his works wide and broad enough to entertain them every one; then we are carried fully and freely towards the haven where we would be.

All afflictions in their own nature are a part of the curse: they work *naturally* against our good; but when once they are taken into the covenant, their nature and property is altered. As waters in their subterranean passages, meeting some virtuous mineral in their course, are thereby impregnated and endowed with a rare healing property to the body; so afflictions passing through the covenant, receive from it a healing virtue to our souls. They are in themselves sour and harsh as wild hedge-fruits; but being engrafted into this stock, they yield the pleasant fruits of righteousness.

Devotion, like fire in frosty weather, burns hottest in affliction. With the ark of Noah, the higher we are tossed with its flood, the nearer we mount towards heaven. When the waters of the flood came upon the face of the earth, down went stately turrets and towers; but as the waters rose, the ark rose still higher and higher. In like sort, when the

waters of affliction arise, down go the pride of life, the lust of the eyes, and the vanities of the world. But the ark of the soul ariseth, as these waters arise, and that higher and higher, even nearer and nearer towards heaven. O admirable use of affliction ! health from a wound ; cure from a disease ! out of grief, joy ; gain out of loss ; out of infirmity, strength ; out of sin, holiness ; out of death, life.—
THE PORTFOLIO.

There is as much difference between the sufferings of the saints and those of the ungodly, as there is between the cords with which an executioner pinions a condemned malefactor, and the bandages wherewith a tender surgeon binds his patient. The effect of the one is to kill, of the other to cure. Believers undergo many crosses, but no curses.

Ah, how sweet are sufferings for Christ ! God forgive them that raise an ill report on the sweet cross of Christ. Our weak and dim eyes look only to the black side of the cross, and this occasions our mistakes concerning it. They that can take it cheerfully on their backs, shall find it just such a burden as wings to a bird, or sails to a ship.

When the grace of an afflicted saint is in exercise, his heart is like a garden of roses, or a well of rose-water, which the more moved and agitated they are, the sweeter is the fragrance they exhale.

Afflictions scour us of our rust. Adversity, like winter weather, is of use to kill those vermin which the summer of prosperity is apt to produce and nourish.

Every vessel of mercy must be scoured in order to brightness. And, however trees in the wilderness may grow without culture, trees in the garden must be pruned to be made fruitful ; and corn-fields must be broken up, when barren heaths are left untouched.

The church below is often in a suffering state. Christ himself was a man of sorrows ; nor should his bride be a wife of pleasures.

All the afflictions that a saint is exercised with, are neither too numerous nor too sharp—not one stroke falls more than needful.

A great deal of rust requires a rough file. When physic

works not kindly, it doth not only leave the disease uncured, but the poison of the physic stays in the body also. Many appear thus poisoned by their afflictions; by the breaking out of their lusts afterwards, they prove to be worse than before.

To the wicked, the issue is sad in regard of sins; they leave them worse, more impenitent, hardened, and outrageous in their wicked practices. Every plague on Egypt added to the plague of hardness on Pharaoh's heart. He that for some time could beg prayers of Moses for himself, at last comes to that pass, that he threatens to kill him if he comes to him any more. O to what a prodigious height we see many come to in sin, after some great sickness or other judgment! Children do not more shoot up in their bodily stature after an ague, than they in their lusts after afflictions. O how greedy and ravenous are they after their prey, when they once get off their clog and chain from their heels!—SPENCER.

In affliction, the believer sees that there is more unbelief in his heart than he before suspected. Sharp afflictions are to the soul as a driving rain to a house: we know not that there are such crannies and holes in the house till we see it drop down here and there. Thus we perceive not how unmortified that corruption, how weak this grace is, till we are searched, and made more fully to know what is in our hearts by such trials. This teaches them to carry a low sail with respect to their own graces, and a tender respect to their brethren, more ready to pity than censure them in their weaknesses.

O comfort one another, Christians, with these words; though your life be evil with troubles, yet 'tis short; a few steps, and you are out of the rain. There is a great difference between the saint, in the evil he meets with, and the wicked, as between two travellers riding contrary ways, (both taken in the rain and wet,) but one rides from the rain, and so is soon out of the shower; but the other rides into the rainy corner, the further he goes the worse it is. The saint meets with troubles as well as the wicked, but he is soon out of the shower; when death comes, he has fair weather; but the wicked, the further he goes the worse;

what he meets with here is but a few drops, the great storm is the last! The pouring out of God's wrath shall be in hell, where all the deeps of horror are opened, both from above of God's righteous fury, and from beneath of their own accusing and tormenting conscience.

The complaint was grievous, *I looked for some to comfort me, but there was none.* It is some kind of ease to sorrow, to have partners; as a burden is lightened by many shoulders; or as clouds, scattered into many drops, easily vent their moisture into air. Yea, the very presence of friends abates grief. The peril that arises to the heart from passion, is the fixedness of it, when, like a corrosive plaster, it eats into the sore. Some kind of remedy it is, that it may breathe out in good society.

Afflictions are God's most effectual means to keep us from losing our way to our heavenly rest. Without this hedge of thorns, on the right hand and left, we should hardly keep the way to heaven. If there be but one gap open, how ready are we to find it, and turn out at it! When we grow wanton, or worldly, or proud, how doth sickness or other afflictions reduce us! Every Christian, as well as Luther, may call affliction one of his best schoolmasters; and with David may say, "Before I was afflicted I went astray, but now I have kept thy word." Many thousand recovered sinners may cry, "O healthful sickness! O comfortable sorrows! O gainful losses! O enriching poverty! O blessed day that ever I was afflicted!" Not only the green pastures and still waters, but the rod and staff they comfort us. Though the word and Spirit do the *main* work, yet suffering so unbolts the door of the heart, that the word hath easier entrance.—SPENCER.

God takes thee out of the shop to show thee the way to the closet; he knocks thee off thy worldly trade that thou mayest follow thy heavenly more closely. The last thing a backslider can look for is, a storm from God, to bring back thee, his runaway servant, to thy work again, and the sooner it comes the more merciful he is.—IBID.

Great crosses (says Rutherford) are good physic for great stomachs. Our Lord bloweth off the bloom from our hopes

in this life, and loppeth the branches of our worldly joys well nigh the root, on purpose that they should not thrive. Lord, spoil my fool's heaven in this life, that I may be saved for ever. Our afflictions will serve to carry us to heaven's gate, but they will not enter there and follow us.

Under trials we act the part of children, and suffer ourselves to be governed by sense, and not by reason. Take a sick child, it is in vain to reason with him. He shuns the bitterness of the draught; he will not suffer you to touch the sore place, though you assure him it is the only means by which he can be restored to health. No matter, the child is under the dominion of sense, not of reason, and he is, therefore, wholly governed by the feelings of his senses. So, when cast into the furnace, and under the hands of our gracious Refiner, we are no longer men, but children. It is the flesh which now dictates, and not the spirit. What cares the flesh for argument or reason? it will not assuage its pain, or take away its suffering. It would turn away from the cup, however medicinal, and from the hand of him who would heal us.

God will bear a tender respect to us in all troubles; as a father loves his child, as well when sick as well; nay, he is then more affectionately tender to him; the father then sets the whole house to work for his recovery, some going for a physician, others for friends, others tending him; so when souls are sick, God sets Christians to pray for them, and preachers to comfort them. Yea, suppose thou hast broken some resolutions, and been overtaken, yet what father would take the forfeiture of a bond of his son, especially when he forfeits it against his will? much less will God, who is infinitely more a father to his children.—SPENCER.

"I remember," says Mr. Whitfield, "some years ago, when I was at Shields, I went into a glass-house, and standing very attentive, I saw several masses of burning glass of various forms. The workman took a piece of glass and put it into one furnace, then he put it into a second, and then into a third. I said to him, 'Why do you put this through so many fires?' He answered, 'O sir, the first was not hot enough, nor the second, therefore we put

it into a third, and that will make it transparent.'” This furnished Mr. W. with a useful hint—that we must be tried, and exercised with many fires, until our dross be purged away, and we are made fit for the owner’s use.

Affliction is God’s touchstone; a furnace of trial; a winnowing frame, that blows away the chaff from the good corn; the strait gate and narrow way that leads to heaven; disguised gifts and secret riches; the Christian’s seed time, and wisdom’s opportunities; seeming losses, but real benefits; Joseph’s pit, and a prison, more safe than his mistress’s house; Job’s dunghill, and Daniel’s den, wherein lions gape, but cannot bite; God’s condescension and his work of love, who is doing for us what ourselves ought to do. We ought to have laid aside ourselves, our vanities, and the pomps of the world, but God doth it for us. In the deepest calamity enjoy what is left, and you shall never complain.—SPENCER.

It is recorded, that when on a time the city of Constantinople was shaken with a terrible earthquake, many houses were overthrown, and with the fall many people perished; the whole city is hereupon so amazed, and every one so remembered to think on God, that they fall to their public devotions; the churches were thronged with people; all men for a while were much amended; justice commutative and distributive both advanced; the poor relieved; justice exalted; laws executed; no fraud in bargaining; it was become a very holy place; but when wrath ceased their religion ceased also. And was it not alike in the civil wars of France? after the putting forth of that act or edict, January 1561, and in the second and third years of those wars, such as were of the religion then groaning under the heavy cross of poverty, oppression, and war, how devout were they towards God! very careful in their ways! glad to hear any preach the word, and glad to receive the sacrament any way; but when the third peace was concluded, which seemed a very sound peace, and the rod was now thought to be removed afar off; such carelessness and security overgrew the hearts of all, and in the Protestants there was so cold a zeal, that within less

than two years, a sermon plainly made with good grounds of divinity, was not thought to be worth the hearing, unless it were spiced with eloquence, or flourished over with courtly expressions. The case is ours; witness that Marian persecution, when so many of the dear children of God mounted like Elias to heaven in fiery chariots; what prayers were made within the land and without! and what coldness benumbed some hot ones of that time not long after! Call to mind that miraculous year of 1588. How did the piety of our land exceed at that time! Young and old then came together into the courts of the Lord; sabbaths were then sanctified, week-days well spent. How did the people flock to church! It might have been written in golden letters over every church-door in the land, "One heart, one way;" such was the unity, such was the uniformity, of their devotions at that time; but with the cold of the winter, their devotion grew cold too; and many months had not passed, but as in few things some were the better, so in many things a great deal worse. To come yet downwards, anno 1625, to omit others. The chief city of our kingdom being struck with the plague of pestilence, seemed no more than a dreadful dungeon to her own, a very Golgotha to others; what then? The king commands a Nineveh-like humiliation; with what eagerness were those fasts devoured. What loud cries did beat on all sides of the gates of heaven! and with what unexpected, inconceivable mercies were they answered? Suddenly those many thousands were brought down to one poor unit, not a number; then was all the fasting and mourning turned into joy and laughter: and as Bishop Hall observed in a sermon at court, "To come yet lower, to this very year, this very day; how hath the sword devoured! and whilst it did so, how did the people unite and associate! but when it seemed to be but a little sheathed, what remissness, what divisions were found amongst us!" It is so, and it is not well that it is so. It is a reproach to some, no plague, no paternoster, no punishment, no prayer."—IBID.

Our hours of misery become such, because we feel them

singly, and apart from the rest of life. But we know not what those shades will be, when the whole, with its reliefs and lights, is seen together. The minute insect which moves upon the face of a pictured landscape, as upon a wide and boundless plain, may feel itself at times buried in the deepest gloom of midnight; while the eye that takes it all at once, sees in those dark lines the contrast which gives effect and brilliancy to the general design. In like manner, the most grateful and exhilarating draught, if analyzed, will be often found to contain materials which taken singly are bitter and revolting to the taste. Nevertheless, these are, perhaps, the ingredients which give the highest zest and flavour to the compound. Thus it may be when our whole past experience becomes present to us at once. It is true, that our saddest days and darkest dispensations will re-appear; but they will not meet us, as they did upon the road of life, unmingled and unrelieved. Every danger will be accompanied by its deliverance; every perplexity by its extrication; every night of heaviness by the joy that ushered in the morning. And thus the path of life, when life is gathered into one united whole, will, like the discords in music, only serve to render the harmony more perfect and more enchanting.—WOODWARD.

A physician or surgeon, when he meeteth with a sore festered, or full of dead flesh, he applieth some sharp corrosive to eat out the dead flesh, that would otherwise spoil the cure, which being done, the patient, it may be, impatient of anguish and pain, cries out to have it removed; no, says the surgeon, it must stay there till it has eaten to the quick, and effects that thoroughly for which it is applied, commanding those that are about him to see that nothing be stirred till he come again to him; in the mean time, the patient being much pained, counts every minute an hour till the surgeon come back again, and if he stay long, thinketh that he hath forgotten him, or that he is taken up with other patients, and will not return in any reasonable time; thus in the self-same manner doth God deal oftentimes with his dearest children, as David and St. Paul. The one was determined more than once or twice to be rid of that soil; and the other

cries out as fast, "Take away the plague from me, for I am even consumed," &c. ; but God makes both of them stay his time. He saw in them, as in others, much dead flesh, much corrupt matter behind, that was yet to be eaten out of their souls; he will have the cross to have its full work upon us, not to come out of the fire as we went in, nor to come off the fire as foul and full of scum, as we were when first set on.—SPENCER.

A ship after a long voyage, being come into harbour, springs a leak, the master is somewhat troubled at it, and is never quiet till it be stopped, so that it is an evil to him; yet he comforts himself in this, that it did not happen unto him when he was out at sea; that had been a great deal worse, and might have proved the ruin of them all; and thus it is for troubles and sorrows, there is a comfortable use to be made of them, so long as they happen to us in this world, so that, by a sanctified use to be made of them, they shall never be actually upon us in the world to come. Hence is that prayer of St. Augustin, and of all good men, in his words, "Here, Lord, do what thou wilt with me, but spare me hereafter; whatsoever my grievances are here upon earth, let me rejoice with thee in heaven."—IBID.

As snow is of itself cold, yet warms and refreshes the earth, so afflictions, though in themselves grievous, yet keep the soul of the Christian warm and make it fruitful. Let the most afflicted know and remember, that it is better to be preserved in brine than to rot in honey.

A gentleman hath a hawk which he prizeth highly, he feeds her with his own hand, is very careful in the pluming of her feathers, sets her upon his fist, and taketh great delight in the sight of her; but for all this he puts vervells upon her legs, and a dark hood upon her head; why is she hood-winked? why fettered? lest she would fly away; he would not by any means have her out of call, but that she might be always within the lure. Thus God deals with his children; there cannot be a more evident sign of his love than when he chastiseth them, nor a greater evidence of his hatred and rejection, than when he gives them over to do what they wish, to go on and prosper in all worldly and licentious

courses: when he lets men neglect all duties without controlment, he makes it manifest, that his purpose is to turn them out of service, and when he lets them feed at will in the pleasant pastures of sin, it is more than probable that he hath destined them to the slaughter.—SPENCER.

The naturalists observe well, that the north wind is more healthful, though the south be more pleasant; the south wind is warm, the north wind is cold; thus adversity is unpleasant, but it keepeth us watchful against sin, and careful to do our duties; whereas prosperity doth flatteringly lull us to sleep: it never goes worse with men spiritually, than when they find themselves corporeally best at ease. Hezekiah was better upon his sick bed than when he was showing off his treasures to the ambassadors of the king of Babylon. How wicked the Sodomites were, we read Gen. xviii., but Ezekiel, chapter xvi., tells us the cause was “fulness of bread.” It was a wise policy then of Epaminondas, to stand sentinel himself, when the citizens were at their bacchanals; and surely when we have the world at will, it is a good providence then to look most to our ways.—IBID.

Plutarch, in his book of conjugal precepts, maketh use of that known parable, how the sun and the wind were at variance, which of them should make a man put aside the cloak which he had upon his back; while the wind blew he held it the harder, but the sun with the strength of his beams made him throw it away from him. Ice, we know, that hangeth from the eaves of the house in frosty weather, is able to endure the stormy blasts of the sharpest north wind; but when the sun breaks out, it melts and falls away. Thus it is that adversity and necessity are rather preservative of piety than plenty and prosperity; this melts them into vanity, causes them to throw aside the garments of righteousness, the armour of God in which they trusted. Affliction makes them buckle it closer, and pursue their march to glory.—IBID.

A man taking his journey into a far country, and inquiring for the way, is told, that there are many plain ways, but the straight and right way is by woods, and hills, and mountains, and great dangers; that there are many marshes

in the way, much difficulty is upon the road thither. Now when he is travelling, and finds such and such things in the way, such mountains and hills of opposition, such flats and valleys of danger, he concludeth that he is in the right way thither. And so the child of God, that is going to the kingdom of heaven, though there be many ways to walk in, yet he knows that there is but one right way, which is very strait and narrow, full of trouble, full of sorrow and persecution, full of all manner of crosses and afflictions; and when in this life he is persecuted for God and a good cause, whether in body or in mind, it argueth plainly that he is in the right way to salvation.—IBID.

The bee is observed to suck out honey from the thyme, a most hard dry shrub: so the good and faithful-minded man sucketh knowledge and obedience from the bitter portion of adversity and the cross, and turneth all to the best; the scouring and rubbing which frets others, makes him shine the brighter; the weight which crushes others, makes him, like the palm-tree, grow the better; the hammer which knocks all in pieces, makes him the broader and the longer; they are made broader on the anvil, and with the hammer, although it be with the hammer, yet they are made to spread the wider.—IBID.

Spring water spouts, when all other waters of the river and the channel are frozen up, that water is living whilst they are dead; all experience teacheth us, that well-water arising from deep springs is better in winter than in summer: such is a true Christian in the evil day; this life of grace gets more vigour by opposition; he had not been so gracious, if the time had been better. I will not say he may thank his enemies, but I must say he may thank God for his enemies.

Stars shine brightest in the darkest night; torches are better for the beating; grapes do not come to the proof till they come to the press; spices smell sweetest when pounded; young trees root the faster for shaking; vines are the better for bleeding; gold looks the brighter for scouring; glow-worms glisten best in the dark; juniper smells sweetest in

the fire ; the palm-tree proves the better for pressing ; chamomile, the more you tread it, the more you spread it. Such is the condition of all God's children, they are then most triumphant when most trampled ; most glorious when most afflicted ; often most in the favour of God when least in man's ; as their conflicts, so their conquests ; as their tribulations, so their triumphs ; they live best in the furnace of persecution : so that heavy afflictions are the best benefactors to heavenly blessings, and when afflictions hang heaviest, corruptions hang loosest ; and grace that is hid in nature, as sweet water in rose leaves, is then most fragrant when the fire of affliction is put under to distil it out.—SPENCER.

Passengers that have been told that their way to such a place lies over a steep hill, or down a craggy rock, or through a moorish fen, or a dirty well, if they suddenly fall into some pleasant meadow, enamelled with beautiful flowers, or a goodly corn-field, or a fair country, look about them, and bethinking themselves where they are, say, Surely we are come out of the way, we see no hills, nor rocks, nor moors, nor fens, this is too good to be the right way : so in the course of life, which is but a pilgrimage on earth, when we pass through fields of corn, or gardens of flowers, and enjoy all worldly pleasures and contentments ; when the wind sits in such a corner as blows riches, honours, and preferments upon us, let us then cast with ourselves, Surely this is not the way the Scripture directeth us unto, here are not the tribulations that we must pass through ; we see little or no footing of the saints of God in this road, but only the print of Dives' feet ; somewhere we missed our way, let us search and find where we went out of it. It is very true that God hath the blessings of this life, and that which is to come, in store for his children, where he seeth it good for them, they may go to heaven this way, but certainly afflictions and trouble are surer arguments of God's love, and a readier way to heaven than the other.—IBID.

It is said of Hagar, that when her bottle of water was spent, she sat down and fell a weeping, as if she had been utterly undone ; her provision and her patience, her bottle and

her hope, were both out together. O! what must she do? What? Why, there was upon the very place, and that near at hand, comfort enough; a well of water to refresh her, had she but had her eyes open to have seen it. Gen. xxi. 19. Thus it is, that in the midst of afflictions and distress men repine as if they were quite left; they eye the empty bottle, the cross that is at present upon them, but, for want of spiritual sight, they see not the fountain of living waters, Christ Jesus, with the open arms of his mercy, ready to relieve them; they, as it were, groan under the heavy burden of oppression, but for want of coming to Christ, and believing on him, they miss of speedy refreshing which otherwise they might happily enjoy.—IBID.

A man when he would drink of the water of the river, he drinketh not of it near the sea where it is brackish, but he goes up to the fountain where it is sweet and agreeable. And thus, if we will find comfort in our afflictions, we must learn to take them out of God's hand, to pass by the instruments, and look up to the great Agent; for in the second cause we shall find much malice and hatred, but in God much mercy and goodness; and thus did Job when the Chaldeans robbed him; thus David when Shimei cursed him; thus Joseph when his brethren maligned him; and thus that kingly picture of patience, Car, R. I. when he was worried to death by his own enraged people.—IBID.

He that goeth towards the sun shall have his shadow follow him; but he that runneth from it shall have it fly before him: so he that marcheth with his face towards the Sun of Righteousness, that setteth himself to do the things that may be without offence to God and man, shall be sure to have his afflictions close at his heels; as for him that hath his back upon Christ, that maketh a trade of sin, his sorrow and vexation of spirit, like the shadow, may be still before him in this world, but they will be sure to meet him in another —IBID.

A believer welcomes afflictions if his father bids, though a frowning friend, just as we welcome clouds, though they are frequently with storms and rain, blackening the shining

prospect all around, shading the beauties of the opening year, and shutting us up in our dwellings. Why? Because we know the earth is enriched by their precious stores, and will yield a fruitful summer, and more plenteous crop.—
IBID.

Happy the believer who, the more afflictions assail him, cleaves the more closely to the Lord. Like the traveller overtaken in a storm, who, when the rain beats upon him, or the snow drifts upon his person, or the mountain wind drives furiously against him, lays firmer hold of his cloak, and wraps it closely around him, he, amidst the storm of trouble, keeps faster hold of the *man who is a hiding place from every wind, and a covert from every storm.*

Pliny records the manner of the Psylli (which are a kind of people of that constitution that no venom will hurt them) is, that if they suspect any child be none of their own, they put an adder upon it to sting it; and if the flesh swell, they cast it away as a spurious issue; but if it never so much as cry, nor be the worse for it, then they account it for their own, and make very much of it. This was their manner of trial. In like manner Almighty God tries his children by enduring crosses and afflictions; he suffereth the old serpent to sting them; and if they patiently endure them, and make good use of them, he offereth himself to them, as to his own children, and will make them heirs of his kingdom; but if they fall a crying, and storming, and fretting, and can no way abide the pain, he accounteth them as bastards, and not sons. Heb. xii. 8.—SPENCER.

The stalk and the ear of corn fall upon the thrashing floor under one and the same flail, but the one is shattered in pieces, the other preserved; from one and the same olive, and from one and the same press, is crushed out both oil and dregs, but the one is turned up for use, the other thrown out as unserviceable; thus afflictions are incident to good and bad; may, and do, befall both alike; but by the providence of God, not upon the same account: good men are put into the furnace for their trial, bad men find their ruin; the one is purified by affliction, the other made worse than before; the

self-same affliction is a loadstone to the one, to draw him to heaven, as a millstone to the other, to sink him deeper into hell.—SPENCER.

Jacob, when he saw the angels ascending and descending, inquired who stood at the top of the ladder and sent them. David, though he knew the second cause of the famine that fell out in his army to be the drought, yet he inquired of the Lord what should be the cause of that judgment. And Job could discern God's arrows in Satan's hands, and God's hand in the arms of the Sabeans. So should we do in like case, see God in all our afflictions ; in the visible means see by faith the invisible author, and not look upon the malice of men, or rage of devils, as if either of them were unlimited ; not upon chance, as if that idol were anything in the world ; or as if things casual upon us, were not from appointment by God, even to the least circumstance, to the greatest or least affliction, to the falling of a hair of our heads.—Matt. x. 30.—IBID.

As a father will sometimes cross his son to try his child's disposition, to see how he will take it, whether he will mutter at it, and grow humorous and wayward, and neglect his duty to his father, because his father seemeth to neglect him ; or offer to run away and withdraw himself from his father's obedience, because he seems to carry himself hardly and roughly to him, and to provoke him thereunto : in like manner doth God oftentimes cross his children, and seemeth to neglect them, to try their disposition, what metal they are made of, how they stand affected towards him, whether they will neglect him, because he seemeth to neglect them ; cease to depend upon him, because he seemeth not to look after them ; and say, with Joram's profane spirit, This evil is of God, and why should I depend upon him any longer ? Or whether they will constantly cleave unto him, though he seem to cast them all off, and say with Isaiah, yet will I wait upon God, though he hide his face from me.—IBID.

Affections.

THE condition of men in this world is like the sea, the theatre of inconstancy. Their affections are like the winds ; some are turbulent, others serene and cheerful ; some warm and comforting, others cold and sharp ; some placid and gentle, others stormy and furious ; and 'tis as difficult to regulate the affections, as to order those discordant spirits in the air. Just as the heavens are serene and calm, and suddenly their aspect is defaced with storms ; so the soul, which was at peace, is at once violently disordered, and torn with tempestuous passions. Something of government is still preserved in the natural conscience, but in the affections insubordination reigns ; the understanding is defaced by them, and men are enslaved under their tyranny, until he who rides in the whirlwind, and rules the storms in the heavens, brings them into captivity to Christ, and says, Let there be peace within !

As the diseases of the body, though the disorder of nature, yet have certain causes, and a regular course, as in the change of an ague a shivering cold is attended with a fiery heat, and that with an overflowing perspiration ; in like manner the irregular passions are productive of one another. Love is the radical affection, and when it leads to a desired object, has always hatred in the rear, if disappointed and crossed in its desires ; so joy, in the fruition of a dear object, is attended with grief, that lies in ambush, and immediately seizes upon the soul when the object is withdrawn. And, as in the vibrations of a pendulum the motion is always as strong in proportion one way as it was the other ; so according to the excess of love will be the excess of grief. Of this we have an eminent instance in David, whose sorrow for the death of his rebellious son was as immoderate as his love, the cause of it.

The affections and passions originally implanted in us by the Creator, however debased by sin, when regulated by the law of God, and free from other restraints, become the foundation of all the other relations of life, the source and

spring of all energy and activity, equally beneficial to individuals, families, and nations ; like a river which, gliding within the regular banks, beautifies and enriches the neighbouring plains. But when their regular course is not bounded by scriptural restraints, when they break the bounds appointed of God, they spread vice, discord, disease, and misery around with horrible rapidity : like the same river obstructed in its natural channel, overflowing its banks, inundating and desolating the fields, and converting the neighbouring country into a marsh, or fen, whose stagnating waters spread a stench and infection all around.

There are some whose passage from a state of nature to a state of grace has been gentle and easy. They cannot understand the measureless extent of joy which is felt by the poor castaway rescued from depths of wretchedness to peace. There is something like intoxication of delight about the conversion of certain great offenders, which others, like the elder brother in the parable, are offended with ; they do not recognise it as belonging to their experience ; they call it enthusiasm, fanaticism ; “ they are angry, they will not go in.” Let them not doubt the reality of it. A man who comes from a dark chamber into the bright shining light of day, experiences a dazzling brilliancy in that which to another is mere ordinary sunshine. As with their joys, so it is with their groaning and sorrows. A soldier that has been scarred and wounded in the wars, shall find his wounds smart in old age, and bring on premature decrepitude. And the soul that has suffered in its spiritual contests with the devil, that has long lain in the captivity of the enemy, will long mourn the wounds and scars, and weaknesses, and deficiencies, that his more happy brethren will know nothing of.

The difference between the carnal and the spiritual man is in the way that they regard God and the world. They are as opposite as two beings who occupy different hemispheres, and differ like an inhabitant of heaven and a mere denizen of this world.

How many thousands exercise their affections and feelings without recognising God in them at all ! They much resemble

a person who, being put into possession of a fine garden, should experience no other gratification than that of devouring greedily the fruits, regardless of the magnitude of the gift, or the bounty of the giver.

When we cast our eyes over those wide, unreclaimed regions of moral delusion, which an unknown God has for so many ages visited in the terrors of his power, and cherished in the relentings of his providence, how sad and appalling the aspect of the past! What ruin do we behold in the noblest work of God! What waste of intellect, what perversion of energy, what pitiable depravity of affection, what unrelenting tyranny of error! Like the despotic elements of nature broke loose from their office of ministering to the health and solace of mankind, the moral energies of man seem there to emulate the operations of the earthquake and the whirlwind, and to aim only at confounding order, and perpetuating wickedness.

Christians, however exact and regular in the detail of duties, where the religious affections do not hold dominion, give an impression similar to that of leafless trees observed in winter, admirable for the distinct exhibition of their boughs so clearly defined, left destitute of all the soft, green, luxuriant foliage which is requisite to make a perfect tree. The affections which exist in such minds seem to have a bleak abode, somewhat like those deserted nests which you often see in such trees.

The fervour which ensues upon the apprehended love of God, prompting men to such services as are suitable to a state of devotedness to his interests, is, in some, more intense and durable; in others, more flashy and inconstant. As, though flax set on fire will flame more than iron, yet withal it will smoke more, and will not glow so much, nor keep heat so long.

A believer's affections are too often like a cascade or waterfall that flows downward; instead of being like a fountain, which rises and shoots upwards toward heaven.

They are of excellent use, when subordinate to the direction of the renewed mind, and the empire of the sanctified will: when in rise, degrees, and continuance, they are

ordered by the rule of true judgment. What the winds are in nature, they are in man : if the air be always calm without agitation, it becomes unhealthful, and unuseful for maintaining commerce between the distant parts of the world. Moderate winds purify the air, and serve for navigation. And thus our voluble passions are of excellent use, and when sanctified, transport the soul to the divine world, to obtain felicity above. But when they are exorbitant and tempestuous, they cause fearful disorders in men, and are the causes of all the sins and miseries in the world.

Dost thou ever raise thy little dam across the streamlet, and think to dry the bed below ? Hast thou accomplished thy work, and stood watching awhile thy success ? Hast thou seen the water above deepen and widen, and gather strength, and at length, impatient of restraint, push through thy yielding barrier, and resume its accustomed course ? But couldst thou have turned the stream into another channel, thou hadst triumphed, and the former bed had been left dry. So thou hast attempted, perhaps, to confine thy sinful will by the barrier of good resolutions. Thou hast seemed for awhile to gain thy point, and sin was at a stand. Alas ! thou hast found that it but gained force by restraint ; ere awhile the inclination has burst through all thy well-formed resolves, and hath rushed more impetuously than ever to the forbidden object. No ; the will and affections must be turned into another course—towards God and heaven, and things spiritual ; and then shall they cease to flow through the tempting vanities of this evil world. “ No man could bind him, no, not with chains ; because that he had been often bound with fetters and chains, and the chains had been plucked asunder by him, and the fetters broken in pieces : neither could any man tame him.—Mark v. 3, 4. But it has happened unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed, to her wallowing in the mire.—2 Pet. ii. 22. This I say, then, walk in the spirit, and ye shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.—Gal. v. 16.

The lusts of the world are so strong and impetuous, that

they are apt to inflame the desires, and even violently to carry away the heart, of a man. And for this cause likewise use it, as if you used it not ; engage yourselves as little upon it as you can : do as mariners in a mighty wind, hoist up a few sails ; expose as few of thy affections to the rage of worldly lusts as may be ; beware of being carried where two seas meet, as the ship wherein Paul suffered shipwreck ; I mean, of plunging thyself in a confluence of many boisterous and conflicting businesses, lest, for thine inordinate prosecution of worldly things, the Lord either give thy soul over to suffer shipwreck in them, or strip thee of all thy lading and tackling ; break thine estate all to pieces ; and make thee glad to get to heaven upon a broken plank.

Being with my friend in a garden, we gathered each of us a rose. He handled his tenderly ; smelt to it but seldom and sparingly. I always kept mine to my nose, or squeezed it in my hand, whereby, in a very short time, it lost its colour and sweetness : but *his* still remained as sweet and fragrant as if it had been growing upon its own root. These roses, said I, are the true emblems of the best and sweetest creature-enjoyments in the world, which, being cautiously and moderately used and enjoyed, may for a long time yield sweetness to the possessor of them ; but, if once too hard, they quickly wither in our hands, and we lose the comfort of them ; and that, either through the soul's surfeiting, or the Lord's righteous and just removal of them, because of the excess of our affections to them. It is a point of excellent wisdom, to keep the golden bridle of *moderation* upon all the affections we exercise on earthly things ; and never to let slip the reins of the affections unless they move towards God, in the love of whom there is no danger of excess.

Let that rapid torrent of youthful strength and vivacity which, if left to itself, would only be wasted and dashed against rocks from precipice to precipice, be turned into a profitable course. Let this stream be brought into the channel of devotion, and it will move the machine of the christian life, and be the source of innumerable blessings to man.

He that feeds a lion must obey him, unless he make his den

to be his prison. Our lusts are as wild and cruel beasts, and, unless they feel the load of fetters and of laws, will grow unruly and troublesome, and increase as we give them satisfaction. Unless the affections be mortified, they will not be stopped by purposes and easy desires.

He that rideth a fierce horse, let the horse keep what pace he will, so long as the rider commands him by the bridle, we say he rides strongly; but if the horse get the bit in his mouth and run away, the faster his pace, the weaker the rider, because he cannot check him: our affections are just like that fine horse, and our reason should be as strong a bridle, stir they never so much; if reason commands, we are strong—but if reason have no power, and our passions are loose, then, certainly, the more violent they are, the more weak we are.—SPENCER.

Anger.

RASH and sudden motions are never without sin; some pettish spirits are like fine glasses, broken as soon as touched, and all on fire upon every slight and trifling occasion; when meek and grave spirits are like flints that do not send out a spark, but after violent and great collision; *feeble* minds have a *habit* of wrath, and like broken bones are apt to roar with the least touch; it argues a very unsanctified spirit to be so soon moved.

Let it be like the fire of thorns, quickly extinct. A spark or coal of fire, if it light on us, it will not burn us if it be presently shook off; but if it lie still, it causeth burning.

Anger is a young twig, but envy is a tree, and a great beam.

Adrian the emperor gave the crier great thanks, who, when he was bidden to quiet the tumultuous people with an imperious "hold your tongues," he held out his hand only, and when the people listened with great silence to hear the cry, this is what he said, "The emperor requires of you, viz. to be silent;" and this is the ready way to make all

quiet—a soft answer pacifies wrath. It was Abigail's gentle apology that disarmed David's fury; and Gideon's mild and modest answer stilled the hot and hasty Ephraimites: lay but a flint upon a pillow and you break it easily, but hard to hard will never do the deed. It is not the vieing one angry word with another; grievous words stir up strife—harsh and angry words cast oil upon the flame; set the passions afloat, there is no hope, not one wise word to be expected.—SPENCER.

It is reported of Titus Vespasian, that when any one spoke ill of him, he was wont to say, that he was above false reports; and if they were true, he had more reason to be angry with himself than the relator. And the good Emperor Theodosius commanded no man should be punished that spake against him; for what was spoken slightly, said he, was to be laughed at; what spitefully, to be pardoned; what angrily, to be pitied; and if truly, he would thank him for it. O that there were *not* such a spirit, wherein men, like tinder, are ready to take fire upon the least spark that falls, to quarrel sometimes with the most inoffensive word that can be spoken; whereas, the best way is to be silent, say nothing, and you pay a talking man to the purpose. Thus it was, that Hezekiah would not answer Rabshakeh, nor Jeremy, Hannanish, nor our blessed Saviour his railing adversaries, Matt. xxvii. 39; he reviled not his revilers, he threatened not his opposers.—1 Pet. ii. 23.—IBID.

Angels.

In ecclesiastical history there is mention made of one Theodorus, a martyr, put to extreme torments by Julian the Apostate, and dismissed again by him when he saw him unconquerable. Ruffinus, in his history, saith, that he met with this martyr a long time after his trial, and asked him whether the pains he felt were not insufferable. He answered, that at first it was somewhat grievous, but after a while there seemed to stand by him a young man in white,

who, with a soft comfortable handkerchief, wiped off the sweat from his body, which through extreme anguish was little less than blood, and bade him be of good cheer ; inso-much as that it was rather a punishment than a pleasure to him to be taken off the rack, which when the tormentors had done, the angel was gone. Thus it is that the blessed angels of God have ministered from time to time to his people in the day of their distress, it may be bringing food to their bodies, as once to Elijah ; but certainly comfort unspeakable to their souls, as to Jacob, Hagar, Daniel, Zacharias, Joseph, Cornelius, Paul, &c., and to our modern martyrs in their prisons, at the stake, and in the fire ; they pity our human frailties, and secretly suggest comfort, when we perceive it not ; they are as ready to help us as the bad angels are to tempt us ; they always stand looking on the face of God to receive orders, for the accomplishment of our good, which they no sooner have than they readily despatch even with weariness of flight.—SPENCER.

Activity—Actions.

A friend gives me a ring, I will wear it for his sake ; a book, I will use it for his sake ; a jewel, I will keep it for his sake ; that is, so as may best express my love and report his goodness ; and were we truly thankful to our God, we would then use all his tokens for his sake, do all things to his glory ; we would eat our meals to him, wear our clothes to him, spend our strength for him, live to him, sleep to him, die for him, &c. Thus we should do ; but, alas ! we use his blessings as Jehu did Jehoram's messengers, David Goliath's sword ; men turn them against their master, and fight against heaven with their health, wit, wealth, friends, means, and mercies, that they have from thence received.—SPENCER.

Ephorus, an ancient historian, and scholar to Isocrates, had no remarkable thing to write of his country, and yet was willing to insert the name of it in his history, and therefore brings it in with a cold parenthesis. Athens did this famous

thing, and Sparta did that ; and at that time my countryman Cummins did nothing. God forbid that England and Englishmen should be so recorded in ecclesiastical history, as to have their names put in with a blank ; such a church did thus nobly, and such a people suffered thus pitifully, and at that time the men of England did just nothing. To be more particular, such a man did so much, and such a man gave so much for the glory of Christ, and succoured poor Christians, and at that time thou didst nothing, thou gavest nothing ; thou professest thyself to be a Christian, be an active Christian ; there be not only walls upon earth, but a book in heaven, wherein the names of Christian benefactors are written ; let it be thy care to find thy name there, otherwise it will be no more honour for thee to be put into the chronicle, than it was for Pontius Pilate to have his name mentioned in the creed.—IBID.

Whilst the stream keeps running, it keeps clear ; but if it come once to a standing water, then it breeds frogs and toads and all manner of filth. The keys that men keep in their pockets, to use every day, wax brighter and brighter ; but if they be laid aside and hang by the walls, they soon grow rusty : thus it is that action is the very life of the soul ; whilst we keep going and running in the ways of God's commandments, we keep clean and free from the world's pollutions ; but if we once flag in our diligence and stand still, O what a puddle of sin will the heart be ! How rusty and useless will our graces grow ! How unserviceable for God's worship, how unfit for man's benefit, by reason of the many spiritual diseases that will invade the soul ! Just like scholars that are for the most part given to a sedentary life, whose bodies are more exposed to ill humours than any others ; whereas, they whose livelihoods lie in a handicraft trade are always in motion and stirring, so that the motion expels the ill humours, that they cannot seize upon the body ; so in the soul, the less any man acts in the matter of its concernment, the more spiritual diseases and infirmities will grow in it ; whereas, the more active and industrious men are, the less power will ill distempers have upon them.—IBID.

Luther was offered to be made a cardinal if he would be

quiet ; he answered, No, not if I might be pope ; and defends himself thus against those who thought him haply a proud fool for his pains : Let me be counted fool or anything, said he, so I be not found guilty of cowardly silence. The Papists, when they could not rule him, railed on him—called him an apostate ; he confesseth the action, and saith : I am, indeed, an apostate, but a blessed and holy apostate, one that hath fallen off from the devil : then they called him devil, but what said he ? Luther is a devil, be it so ; but Christ liveth and reigneth, that's enough for Luther, so be it. Nay, such was the activity of Luther's spirit, that when Erasmus was asked by the elector of Saxony why the pope and his clergy could so little abide Luther, he answered, For two great offences, meddling with the pope's triple crown, and the monks' sensuality, and hence was all they hated him for. If he would have been quiet and silent, they never would have meddled with him or his profession. Thus it is, that a wolf flies not upon a painted sheep, and men can look upon a painted toad with delight ; it is not the lofty pace, but the furious march of the soldier that sets men a gazing and dogs a barking. Let but a man glide along with the stream of the world, do as others do, he may sit down and take his ease ; but if he once strive against the stream, stand up in the cause of God, and act for Christ, then he shall be sure to meet with as much despite and malice as men and devils can possibly throw upon him.—**IBID.**

Plutarch speaks of two men that were hired at Athens for some public works, whereof the one was full of tongue, but slow at hand ; and the other blank in speech, yet an excellent workman. Being called upon by the magistrates to express themselves, and to declare at large how they would proceed, when the first had made a large speech, and described it from point to point, the other seconded him in a few words, saying, Ye men of Athens, what this man hath said in words, that will I make good in true performance. And as he was adjudged the better artisan, so is the man of action the better Christian ; it is not the man of words, but the man of deeds ; not the barren, but the fruitful ; not the discours-

ing, but the doing Christian that shall be blessed here in this world, and happy in that which is to come.—IBID.

When the inclination leads to a calling, a man applies himself continually to it; for the work produces delight, and the delight strongly inclines him to work: thus, according to the tendency of our corrupt natures is the constant practice of sin. We may as surely judge of the active powers of the soul by the actions that proceed from them, as of the vigour of the sap in the root, by the number of the fruits of the tree. It is said of the scoffers, they walk after their own lusts!

Good intentions do no more make a good action, than a fair mark makes a good shot by an unskilful archer. God did not like Saul's zeal when he persecuted the Christian church, though he thought (no question) that he did him good service therein.

Beautiful is the connexion between man's responsibility to labour in spiritual things, and the covenanted faithfulness of him who must give the increase. He who has the promise that he shall bring home his sheaves with joy, is one who has *first* gone forth bearing precious seed with him. That God and man must unite together was strikingly illustrated in the practice of the heathen. When they went to plough in the morning, they laid one hand on the plough to speak their own part to be painfulness, and held up the other hand to Ceres, the supposed goddess of corn, to show that their expectation of plenty was from their supposed deity.

A man who is under the dominion of spiritual sloth is like one who has a journey to take, but who has fetters on his legs; like a soldier who must stand up in the battle, but without armour or weapons of offence; or like a mariner who sits inactive in his boat, and leaves it to the mercy of the waves. Do you imagine that all that is necessary for you to do is to step into the boat, and lie down and sleep, and leave it to pursue its own course? This is enough if you are to sail with the stream, and only to be stopped when you reach the gulf of perdition below. But if you are to sail against the stream, and avoid having your bark dashed upon some

neighbouring rock, there must be watchfulness, and strength, and exertion. You will find all these necessary, or you will never reach the fountain of life.

Adoption—Assurance.

Now sometimes the soul, because it hath somewhat remaining in it of the principle that it had in its old condition, is put to the question, whether it be a child of God or not, and thereupon, as in a thing of the greatest importance, puts in its claim with all the evidences that it hath to make good its title. The Spirit comes and bears witness in this case. An allusion it is to judicial proceedings in point of titles and evidences. The judge being set, the person concerned lays his claim, produceth his evidences, and pleads them ; his adversaries endeavouring, all that in them lies, to invalidate them and disannul his plea, and to cast him in his claim. In the midst of the trial, a person of known and approved integrity comes into the court, and gives testimony fully and directly on behalf of the claimant, which stops the mouths of all his adversaries, and fills the man that pleaded with joy and satisfaction. So is it in this case. The soul, by the power of its own conscience, is brought before the law of God ; there a man puts in his plea, that he is a child of God, that he belongs to God's family, and for this end produces all his evidences, everything whereby faith gives him an interest in God. Satan in the mean time opposeth with all his might ; sin and law assist him ; many flaws are found in his evidences, the truth of them all is questioned, and the soul hangs in suspense as to the issue. In the midst of the plea and the contest the Comforter comes ; and by a word of promise or otherwise, overpowers the heart with a comfortable persuasion (and bears down all objections) that his plea is good, and that he is a child of God. And therefore it is said of him, "The Spirit beareth

witness with our spirit." When our spirits are pleading their right and title, he comes in and bears witness on our side; at the same time, enabling us to put forth acts of filial obedience, kind and child-like, which is crying, Abba, Father, Gal. iv. 6. Remember still the manner of the Spirit's working before mentioned; that he doth it effectually, voluntarily, and freely. Hence, sometimes the dispute hangs long; the cause is pleading many years. The law seems sometimes to prevail; sin and Satan to rejoice; and the poor soul is filled with dread about its inheritance; perhaps its own witness, from its faith, sanctification, former experience, keeps up the plea with some life and comfort: but the work is not done, the conquest is not fully obtained, until the Spirit, who worketh freely and effectually, when and how he will, comes in with his testimony also; clothing his power with a word of promise, he makes all parties concerned to attend unto him, and puts an end to the controversy.

"He looked for a city," &c. Thus the Hebrews took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing in themselves that they had a better and an enduring substance. Thus we are preserved from the power of worldly temptations. Narrow and barren commons may urge the sheep to wander; but it is otherwise with the green pastures and still waters. Fill a Christian with all joy and peace in believing, and he has no room to covet after evil things. His exposure is when "the consolations of God are small with him."
—JAY.

While the heaviest strokes fall on believers, their souls are ravished with the sweetest joy and exultation. Yet 'tis not thus always with the saints; for though sin be pardoned, yet the apprehensions of guilt may remain, as old wounds, though cured, yet are felt in change of weather. When a stream is disturbed, it does not truly represent the object when the affections are disordered, the mind does not judge aright of a Christian's state. A serpent may hiss when it has lost its sting. I doubt not but some of the saints, whom death brings *safely*, yet *not comfortably*, to heaven, have

often been in anxieties to the last ; till their fears were dispelled by the actual fruition of blessedness, as the sun sometimes sets in dark clouds, and rises in a glorious horizon.

A servant may hope for kind attentions from his master in a day of necessity, though still to a limited extent ; but a son is assured that whatever relief a father can afford him shall be readily bestowed. His necessities may be great, and his trouble of long continuance, but he has no fear that the tender sympathy of his father shall fail. Now this is what “ a spirit of adoption ” gives to every true Christian, “ He knows in whom he has believed.”

“ Crying, Abba, Father.” How delightful the relations between God and the Christian as father and child ! The child receives everything freely from paternal love ; it does not come to the father as purchaser, or as the merchant with an equivalent. When a desire for any good arises in the child’s mind, it does not offer to buy it at a price, but simply expresses its feelings, and asks it as a gift. In its earliest years the child cannot speak its wants plainly, yet even in infancy they are made known by looks and cries, and the father understands these expressions of its wishes. As the child grows up, all that the father requires is an affectionate and dutiful conduct, a reverence, and honour, and obedience, totally distinct from slavish fear. Such will be the spirit of the adopted child.

“ Abba, Father.” It is an expression by which, in the simplest language, the strongest idea is conveyed. It gives us the different feelings of a slave, and of a child when the same person is in sight, while the slave would stand in silence, afraid to speak in the presence of his master, the child would run to him crying, My father, my father ! the ingenuous affection of a child would give it at once confidence and love. It is my father ! Thus impressed, a child does not stop to reason. There is an innate confidence, an innate love, an innate reverence, an innate desire to please him. Thus it is when the Holy Spirit acts as a spirit of adoption.

Spiritual adoption rises far above any adoption known among men. There is a spirit attending it which proclaims

it infallibly to be the adoption of God. A prince might adopt the child of a beggar, but could not insure to that child a princely spirit. He might employ means, give him the best title, the best example, the best counsel, and yet the unto-ward youth might grow up with a low taste, and corrupt habits formed in his old connexions. But God never adopts any as his sons whom he does not also in due time invest with the temper and disposition of sons. With the title of a son of God he bestows also the qualifications—the spirit of a son. “And *because* ye are sons,” &c. Gal. iv. 6. The adoption, and the temper, and feelings, which should naturally belong to a child and an heir of God, can never exist apart one from the other. And where there are no traces and evidences of the child-like spirit, there no adoption into the family of God has yet taken place.

Fire is known to be no painted or imaginary fire by two notes, by heat, and by the flame. Now if the case so fall out, that the fire wants a flame, it is still known by the heat. In like manner there are two witnesses of our adoption or sanctification, God’s Spirit and our spirit; now if it so fall out, that a man feels not the principle, which is the spirit of adoption, he must then have recourse to the second witness, and search out in himself the signs and tokens of the sanctification of his own spirit, by which he may certainly assure himself of his adoption, as fire may be known to be fire by the heat, though it want a flame.—SPENCER.

Assurance is a fruit whose root is in heaven; while carnal presumption is a rush that groweth in the puddled mire of our own hearts. We must be diligent to perform our duties; this is the oil which keeps the lamp of assurance burning. Let us not be content to dwell in the tents of Kedar, where there is nothing but blackness and darkness, but ascend the mountains of God’s promises, the cross of Christ, and there take a view of Canaan with its goodly prospects and glorious light. Assurance is the foretaste of heaven.

Salvation, and the joy of salvation, are not always contemporaneous: the latter does not always accompany the former in present experience, though ultimately, as cause and effect,

they must be united. Though they are not *parallel* lines, yet they are *converging* lines which must meet at last, however gradual be the tendency towards each other. They differ as life and health, as heirship and the means of knowing it.

Hope is not paid down in ready money, as we say, what we hope for, but we have a good bond by assurance. Hope has still something in hand, because that which faith lays hold of is really and actually its own. Hope is faith's rent-gatherer, and takes up that which faith claims upon the bargain which Christ has made for us. An earnest penny is more than nothing; and the ground of our work is the earnest which God gives us of our inheritance. Just as the blossoms of spring do not only promise, but are God's earnest to represent the fruits which will wax ripe in autumn.

As certain as he that hath a corporeal eye knoweth that he sees, so certainly he that is illuminated with the light of faith knoweth that he believeth. The glorious splendour of such an orient and splendid jewel cannot but show itself, and shine clearly to the heart wherein it dwells. Like a bright lamp set up in the soul, it does not only manifest other things, but also itself appears by its own light. When I see and rely upon a man promising me this or that, I know, I see, and rely upon him. Shall I by faith behold my blessed Redeemer lifted up, as an only antitype of the brazen serpent, for the everlasting cure of my wounded conscience, and rest upon him, and yet know no such thing?

Assurance is often hindered by the mind being improperly directed to faith, (as if it were a kind of abstract principle,) rather than to the truth, or the object of faith; to the acts of their mind, instead of the truth of God. To such we would simply say, "Look unto Jesus." A man who hears good news and believes it, knows, and can tell where his joy arises. If addressed to him, and containing what is adapted to his circumstances, it fills him with gladness. This gladness does not arise from any reflection on the exercises of his mind in believing it, but from *the thing itself* believed.

It were well for our peace if we looked more to the thing testified, than in what manner we have believed the tidings.

If a man have his debts paid, he is able to produce his acquittance that they are paid: when we have such promises so made over to produce, they are, as it were, acquittances under hand and seal. Suppose a relation gives you an inheritance, and good evidences to assure you of it, and an erring fellow should come and tell you your evidence is naught, will you, upon his prattle, judge your title as nothing? When the Lord has given you good evidence of forgiveness, will you then, upon Satan's cavils, judge your evidences to be nothing?

They who on the strength of Scripture will not believe that their sins are forgiven them, without it is confirmed to them by a personal grant, are saying that they will not trust God without his bond.

It is the light of the Sun of Righteousness reflected, by the oracles of truth in his church, which causes the spring-tide of spiritual peace and joy in the heart; the absence of that light produces an ebb in the waters of spiritual consolation. The awakened mind, jealous of its state, is in danger of attributing effects and feelings to nature which grace only can effect. Like the perverted imagination in some cases of lunacy, it rejects the nourishment after which it hungers, for fear of the danger of poison which it associates with the use of that nourishment.

When the sun or a star ariseth, they bring their natural light with them, and thereby discover themselves to the world; so, when the day-star of grace and law of God arise in a man's heart, they bring their light with them, and so manifest themselves to the soul. The law, put into the heart by God, brings a spiritual light with it by which it may be discovered, as a diamond brings with it its own bright and orient sparkling.

The greatest prince observes with delight the affection of the meanest peasants among his subjects; much more would they please themselves, if they had occasion to take notice of any remarkable expression of his favourable re-

spect to them! But how unspeakably more, if he vouchsafe to express it by gracious intimacies, and by condescending familiarities! How doth this person bless himself! How doth his spirit triumph, and his imagination luxuriate in delightful thoughts and expectations, who is in his own heart assured that he has the favour of his prince? Yea, with what complacency are inward friends wont to receive the mutual expressions of each other's love? And can it be thought the love of the great and blessed God should signify less? How great things are comprehended in this—the Lord of Heaven and Earth hath a kindness for me, and bears me good-will! How grateful is the relish of this apprehension, both in respect of what it in itself imports, and what it is the root and cause of!

Many fears, like waves, ever and anon cover the soul that is not buoyed up by assurance; it is more under water than above; whereas one that sees itself folded in the arms of Almighty power, O how such a soul goes mounting before the wind, with his sails filled with joy and peace! Let afflictions come, storms arise, this blessed soul knows where it shall land and be welcome. The *name of God* is his harbour, where he puts in as boldly as a man steps into his own house, when taken in a shower. He hears God calling him into this and other of his attributes, as chambers taken up for him. Isaiah xxvi. "Come, my people, enter into thy chambers." His heart is ever speaking, "Be thou my strong habitation, whereunto I may continually resort."

Believers.

The Gospel is a "depositum," a public treasure, committed to the keeping of every Christian; each man having, as it were, a several key of the church, a several trust for the honour of this kingdom delivered unto him. As, in the solemn coronation of the prince, every peer of the realm hath his situation about the throne, and, with the touch of his hand upon the royal crown, declareth the personal duty

of that honour which he is called unto, namely to hold the crown on the head of his sovereign, to make it the main end of his greatness to study, and by all means endeavour the establishment of his prince's throne; so every Christian, as soon as he hath the honour to be called unto the kingdom and presence of Christ, hath immediately no meaner a depositum committed to his care than the very throne and crown of his Saviour; than the public honour, peace, victory, and stability of his Master's kingdom.

That flower that follows the sun, doth so even in cloudy days; when it does not shine forth, yet it follows the hidden course and motion of it: so the soul that moves after God keeps that course when he hides his face; is content, yea, is glad at his will in all estates, or conditions, or wants.

A kite soaring on high is in a situation quite foreign to its nature; as much as the soul of man is, when raised above this lower world to high and heavenly pursuits. A person at a distance sees not how it is kept in its exalted situation: he sees not the wind that blows it, nor the hand that holds it, nor the string by whose instrumentality it is held. But all of these powers are necessary to its preservation in that preternatural state. If the wind were to sink, it would fall. *It has nothing whatever in itself to uphold itself*: it has the same tendency to gravitate to the earth that it ever had, and, if left for a moment to itself, it would fall. Thus it is with the soul of every true believer. It has been raised by the Spirit of God to a new, a preternatural, a heavenly state; and in that state it is upheld by an invisible and Almighty hand, through the medium of faith. And *upheld it shall be, but not by any power in itself*. If left for a moment, it would fall as much as ever. Its whole strength is in God alone; and its whole security is in the *unchangeableness of his nature*, and in the *efficacy of his grace*. In a word, "it is kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation."

I have often seen young and unskilful persons sitting in a little boat, when every little wave sporting about the sides of the vessel, and every motion and dancing of the barge,

seemed a danger, and made them cling fast upon their fellows; and yet all the while they were as safe as if they sat under a tree, while a gentle wind shook the breeze into a refreshment, and a cooling shade. And the unskilful, inexperienced Christian shrieks out whenever his vessel shakes, thinking it always a danger that the watery pavement is not stable and resident as a rock; and yet all his danger is in himself, none at all from without; for he is indeed moving upon the waters, but fastened to a rock; faith is his foundation, and hope is his anchor, and death is his harbour, and Christ his pilot, and heaven his country: and all the evils of poverty, or affronts of tribunals and evil judges, of fears and sudden apprehensions, are but like the loud wind blowing from the right point; they make a noise, and drive faster to the harbour; and if we do not leave the ship, and leap into the sea; quit the interest of religion, and run to the securities of the world; cut our cables, and dissolve our hopes; grow impatient and hug a wave, which dies in its embraces; we are as safe at sea, *safer in the storm that God sends us*, than in a calm when befriended by the world.

What can a living child, new-born, do? He is as weak as water; he cannot speak, he cannot stand, he cannot conquer a flea. But what may not this child do when he is grown up? There is the spirit of a man in him; there is a soul in him, which in time will do wondrous things: a dead child neither can do anything, neither is there hope that ever he should: but a living child hath a soul, hath that within him which in time will do much. So the believer hath that within him which will be the death of his enemies; he is not only interested in Christ, and what he hath done, but Christ is "in him;" "the Spirit of Christ," which is the power of the living God, is in him. "He that hath not the Spirit of Christ is none of his."—Rom. viii. 9. The *same power* by which Christ overcame is already communicated to the soul of a believer: and thence may he be said *to have already conquered*, because he hath received that Spirit of power, which will certainly work for him the victory.

There is justness and great beauty in the scripture image

of a fruit tree to represent the children of God, and members of Christ. A tree is in itself a pleasing figure ; a fruit tree laden with its precious fruit still more ; and most of all when its fruit is fully ripe, and fit for use. Exactly according to the figure, a real Christian is lovely in his outset ; more so in his steady progress, unawed by worldly fears and hopes, and uncorrupted by alluring objects of sense ; but most of all in old age, when he bears a visible testimony to the faithfulness of God's promises in Christ Jesus, that *he will be as the dew to Israel*, and *that the path of the just shineth brighter and brighter unto the perfect day*. Nevertheless, there will be great variety in the devotional feelings of the soul amidst fixedness of heart to God, and unchanging principle ; like the "tree which is pleasant to the sight, and good for food," that passes through various changes of foliage as the seasons advance, yet produces from year to year the same sweet fruit as when it first became capable of bearing.

A mariner who puts forth to sea, losing sight of land, beholds nothing but a waste of waters around him. The night comes on, and clouds and darkness gather in upon him. And the channel through which he is passing, may be a narrow and a dangerous one. But still he has an infallible guide on board ; he has his chart and his compass to consult with. So the Christian pursuing his course has darkness shrouding his path-way, and storms and tempests threatening his progress : but he, too, has an infallible guide, the Holy Spirit within him, and tracts of light opened upon him in the Scriptures. The mariner, whilst he furnishes his ship with everything likely to be useful in the voyage, mast and sails, rudder and compass, trusts to the winds of heaven to give effect to his preparations, to give, as it were, energy and life to the vessel he navigates : because he knows that without the wind his preparations are useless ; so, without due preparation, the most favourable gale would blow in vain for him. He regulates the sail as the wind requires, and holds to the rudder, never loses sight of the compass, and watchfully keeps the narrow way to which it confines him by night and by day. So, the wise Christian, after all due preparation on his own part

for his voyage, looks up as one continually dependent on the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the one source of all his spiritual life and motion. He is careful to watch the least breathing of the Spirit upon his soul, that he may not quench it, but yield himself up to its full impression. And adding to this his faith all diligence and watchfulness, he is wafted onwards in safety, amidst the storms and wrecks around him in an evil world.—PULPIT.

You look on a poor, praying, self-denying believer, but you look not before you on a saint that shall reign with Christ, and judge the world, “when he cometh to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe.”—2 Thess. i. 10. You see them “sow their seed in tears,” but you see it not springing up; nor do you foresee the joyful harvest. You see them following Christ through tribulation, bearing his cross, and despising the shame; but you see them not yet sit down with him on their thrones. The *fight* you see, but the *triumph* you see not. You see them tossed at sea, but you know not how sure a pilot they have; nor do you see the riches of their freight. You see sickness or persecution unpinning their corruptible rags, and death undressing them, but you see not the clothes which they are putting on. You see them laid asleep by death; but you see not their awaking; nor the rising of their sun, when “the righteous shall have dominion in the morning.” The man that is dead to the world you see; but you see not “the life that is hid with Christ in God,” nor their “appearing with him in glory, when Christ, who is their life, appears.” Your unbelieving souls imagine there will be no May or harvest, because it is now winter with us. You think the rose and beauteous flowers, which are promised us in that spring, are but delusions, because you know not the virtue of that life that is in the root, nor the powerful influence of that Sun of the believer. You see the dead body, but you see not the soul, alive with Christ, retired into its root. You see the candle put out, and know not whither the flame is gone, and think not how small a touch of the yet living soul will light it again.

There cannot be a true judgment of a Christian, either when he is best disposed, or when he is worst disposed. One that has less grace may sometimes, in the use of the means and ordinances, feel high and holy affections in an unusual manner: an excellent saint, in time of temptation, may feel the power of corruption strangely great. Suppose you saw a man of great strength labouring under a fainting fit; at the time he is weaker than a woman; and to judge of his powers, and decide that he was a man of little strength from his present appearance, would be a great mistake; just as it would be if you saw a man in a fever, who, at the time, may be stronger than two, and you decided that he was possessed of great bodily powers. But we may judge of the degrees of grace from the habitual frame of the heart, and the ordinary regularity of the life.

When Matthew Prior was secretary to King William's ambassador in France, A.D. 1698, he was shown, by the French king's household at Versailles, the victories of Louis XIV. painted by Le Brun; and being asked whether the actions of King William were likewise to be seen in his palace? Prior answered, "No; the monuments of my master's actions are to be seen everywhere but in his own house." So the good works of a true believer shine everywhere except in his own esteem.

It is made a matter of surprise that many professors are so unfruitful amidst so much seeming diligence in spiritual things. You go into a garden and behold a stately fruit tree spreading its branches, and covered with abundant blossom, and conclude that in the fall of the year it will be loaded with fruit. Some months after, you again see the tree, expecting fruit on it, and you are surprised to find none. On looking closer into it, you see the remains of a blight, which explains the matter. It is so with many a professor in the church. He stands as a tree in the vineyard, and he is diligent in the use of all the public ordinances; he bears the blossoms of an abundant promise, but months and years roll away, and yet there is no real fruitfulness; he is a barren tree, though covered thickly with the leaves and blossoms of profession. How is this?

Look narrowly, and you will find a blight has come upon the man, and destroyed all chance of fruit. One is blighted with impenitence, another with pride or uncharitableness, a third with worldliness or covetousness; it is this which mars the growth of grace, and this explains the seeming mystery.

The young convert may be compared to a child, whom his father is leading over a rugged and uneven path. After proceeding for some time without much difficulty, he forgets that it has been owing to his father's assistance—begins to think that he may now venture to walk by himself, and consequently falls. Humbled and dejected, he then feels his own weakness, and clings to his father for support. Soon, however, elated with his progress, he again forgets the kind hand which sustains him, fancies he needs no more assistance, and again falls. This process is repeated a thousand times in the course of the Christian's experience, till he learns at length that his own strength is perfect weakness, and that he must depend solely on his heavenly Father.

In the hands of a skilful husbandman, even weeds are turned to good account. When rooted up and burnt, they are good manure, and conduce to fertilize the land they annoyed before. So the doubts, and fears, and the infirmities of the elect are overruled by Almighty grace to their present and eternal good; as conducing to keep us humble at God's footstool; to endear the merits of Jesus, and to make us feel our weakness and dependence, and to render us watchful unto prayer.

Holy fear is a searching the camp that there be no enemy within our bosom to betray us, and seeing that all be fast and sure. For I see many leaky vessels fair before the wind, and professors who take their conversion upon trust, and they go on securely, and see not the under water till a storm sink them.

Conceive the case of a man, who, having been cast upon a dreary inhospitable island, awaits the time for a vessel to come and bear him away. He paces its barren and desert sands, and looks up at the overcast sky, anxiously waiting for its arrival to carry him to a land of light and fertility.

So the Christian, like the exile on a rock, feels that he is far from his natural home, and is looking for, and hasting unto the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. He knows that the vessel is prepared, and the convoy ready, which are to bear him hence from a barren wilderness to a happy land flowing with milk and honey.

Before we can become as healthy and fruitful trees, and bear precious *fruit*, and communicate our light and fruitfulness to others, we must have the generous light of the Sun of Righteousness shining on us. What is it makes the tree on the wall to bear? Not a crude and sour produce, but fruit rich in flavour and maturity? It is the genial heat of the sun reflecting its heat from the wall on the tree. It is the sun pouring its beams upon the wall, which is the cause of its fruitfulness. The wall can thus reflect its warmth and heat on the tree. So the Christian, before he can impart to others, must have light and warmth from Christ shining upon him. *If he would be a source of fruitfulness to others, he must not stand in the shade, but come directly within the beams of the Sun of Righteousness.* Then he will be enabled to reflect the warmth of these beams on others. They will become fruitful from their contact with him. He will be a shining light, and they will drink of his reflected light. His soul will glow with love to Christ, and man for Christ's sake, and he will communicate its generous and life-giving flame to those around him.

How can it be supposed that a believer is freed from the restraints of the law? His wildness and disposition to walk loosely still remain, and he therefore still needs the bit and bridle. Not only colts, but horses already broken, still need a bridle. So, though a believer has learned to obey, and needs not the severity and restraint practised with a colt, yet he still requires a curb and a bridle to restrain his licentiousness, and direct his way. Now the law is that bridle.

A man rescued from drowning, under suspended animation, presents no appearance but that of a dead man, but the spark of life is not extinct, and with proper remedies he will be restored, and perform the offices of life. . So a strong

man, overcome by a violent distemper, has his strength prostrated to the ground, and is as weak as a little child. But the principle of manhood is still within him, and once restored he will again put forth the mightiness of his strength. In like manner a believer is sometimes beat down to the ground with the force of some mighty sin. His conscience, meanwhile, is like that of a man in a swoon ; like David, who, after the matter of Uriah, lived on for *a time* with a stupid conscience. But, as in the royal offender, there is a principle of recovery in him. He needs the arrow of conviction, "thou art the man," to pierce his soul, and he shall straightway be healed.

The liberty of the subject could never be preserved in a lawless state of society, but violence and tyranny would reduce to a slavish obedience the weak and the timid. The palladium of civil liberty is law ; law well defined, excluding the fluctuations of caprice on one side, and of aggression on the other ; law rigorously executed also, for the best code is a dead letter if it be not accompanied by a living and firm executive. So the liberty of the believer is secured by the law of God, when brought under its guidance and government. While living under the misrule of his fallen nature, he is the sport of every capricious imagination, and successively the slave of his predominant passions. Rom. vi. 16. But let Christ's government be set up, and he becomes Christ's *freeman* ; "sin has no longer dominion over him ;" he is no longer its wretched captive, but is under *gracious* law, for "where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty."

We should always stand "with our lamps burning, and our loins girt." A Christian should always be as a ship that has taken in its lading, and is prepared and furnished with all manner of tackling, ready to sail, only expecting the good winds to carry him out of the haven. So should we be ready to set sail for the ocean of eternity, and stand at heaven's gate, be in a perpetual exercise of faith and love, and be fittingly prepared to meet our Saviour.

Believers are mirrors to reflect the glory of God. A mirror, if placed opposite to a luminous object, will reflect

its rays, and show distinctly its image. Such is the Christian man under the Gospel. Looking steadily to God, and beholding him face to face, there is nothing to shut out the rays of his glory, like beams of light, from shining upon them. And now they reflect his light in the imitation of his perfections, and become as so many mirrors, where his image, which they have contemplated in the Gospel, shines forth to the glory of their God.

It is recorded of Alexander the Great, that a soldier was reported to him as having betrayed great cowardice on a particular occasion, on which Alexander called him to him and asked his name. On hearing that his name was Alexander, he upbraided him with the dishonour that he brought on such a name, and entreated him either to change his manners or to change his name, asking him how he could dare, while known as Alexander, to act unworthily? And shall not the Christian remember the high and holy name by which he is called, and dread encountering the guilt and meanness of dishonouring his Head, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners." That *name*, in its very signification, tells him that he is related to the *anointed One*, and that (as the name implies) all his members, in their measure and degree, are anointed ones. How shall they who take this sacred unction upon them, dare to dishonour this name, and so sin against Christ?

A truly gracious man, like a thorough good watch, may deviate and point wrong for a season, but, like the machine just mentioned, will, after a short time, with a single touch, come round, and point right as before.

Observe the daybreak. At first but a beam of light is seen to glimmer in the midst of the darkness, and the night still seems to hold its undisturbed sway. But the beam becomes slowly a streak of light shooting its ray in the path of heaven. It becomes more fixed and determinate in its character—it increases—it is a growing light. There is a mass of darkness yet around, and clouds still hang about it—but it contends successfully with the darkness, still it penetrates—still it breaks through the hideous mass—the contest is no longer doubtful, the clouds and shadows flee

away. But this rising beam, at first so faintly seen and dimly visible, would have been soon lost and overwhelmed in the darkness which it invaded, if it had not been a beam from an exhaustless fountain of light—the sun. *That* continued to send fresh supplies of light by adding beam upon beam. And now it pours out its effulgent rays, and now this dawning beam is become a bright and glorious sun, ascending majestically the heavens, the mighty creative principle of fruitfulness, ripening, maturing, and enriching the earth, and in its brightness showing forth a faint image of its Maker's glory. Striking emblem of the believer's progress! At first spiritually dead, midnight rests upon his soul; but he awakes at the voice of Him who cries, "Awake thou that sleepest," &c. And there is light in his soul! It is a beam from the Eternal Spirit, flashing conviction of his sinfulness, and only serving to make visible to him the darkness and misery of his benighted state. But it leads him on, through many perplexities, in his inquiry how he shall find peace with God. "His feet stumble on the dark mountains," and his little light appears often in danger of being totally eclipsed. But it is like the smoking flax which shall not be quenched. And he has learned to distinguish it at last as the true light; and that which was but a beam becomes a light shining in darkness; and as he continues to follow it, it at last guides him to the cross, and he is enabled steadily to gaze upon him who is *the Light of the world*. From Christ, who was raised from that cross with power, he receives "grace for grace." And now behold him; "looking unto Jesus, he runs the race that is set before him, casting off every weight," and "like the sun when he goeth forth in his strength." Now he causes his light to shine out, and men beholding his good works, God is glorified. He is the cause of fruitfulness to others, and reflects his Maker's image in the beauty of holiness.

The believer's feelings are those of an exile, who, amidst various comforts, still thinks of his home, his country, and his friends. The hope of his return gilds the intermediate hours of his existence; he fulfils his duty, he refreshes his spirit by the objects of beauty or of interest which are

around him, but his affections cling around his native shores. To that unforgotten scene the needle of his heart turns hourly. Thus it is with the Christian on whom the mercy of God is exerting its sacred and purifying influence. Religion is to him, not the cold balance of certain restrictions and certain comforts, but the warm acknowledgments of infinite obligations and infinite love. It is the blessed and refreshing conviction that yet a little while, and the veil which hides him from his true happiness will be withdrawn; that yet a little while, and the Saviour, into whose hands he has confided the great interests of his soul, will return.

Saints are outwitted by the world in the things of the world, and no marvel; neither does it impeach their wisdom, any more than it does a scholar's to be excelled by a cobbler in his mean trade. Nature, where it intends higher excellencies, is more careless in those things which are inferior; as we see in man, who, being made to excel the beasts in a rational soul, is himself excelled by some beast or other in all his senses. Thus the Christian may well be surpassed in matters of worldly commerce, because he has a nobler object in his eye, that makes him converse with the things of the world in a kind of non-attendance; he is not much careful in these matters; if he can die well at last, and be justified for a wise man at the day of resurrection, all is well.

The traveller may go as fast, and ride over as much ground, when the sun doth not shine, as when it doth; (though indeed he goeth not so merrily on his journey;) nay, sometimes he makes the more haste; the warm sun makes him sometimes to lie down and loiter; but when dark and cold, he puts on with more speed. Some graces thrive best, like some flowers, in the shade, such as humility, dependence on God, &c.

It is with God and the soul as between the sun and the earth. In the decline of the year, when the sun seems to draw afar off from us, how doth the earth mourn and droop; how do the trees cast off the ornament of their leaves and fruits; how doth the sap of all plants run down to the roots, leaving the bare boughs seemingly sere and dead! But, at the manifestation of it in the rising of the spring, all

things seem revived ; the earth decks herself in the fresh habiliments of blossoms, leaves, and flowers, to entertain those comfortable heats and influences. So, and no more, in the declining and approach of this all-glorious Sun of Righteousness ; in his presence there is life and blessedness, in his absence nothing but grief, disconsolateness, and despair. If an earthly being do but withdraw himself from us for a time, we are troubled ; how much more if the King of glory shall absent himself from us in displeasure !

To be filling up our thoughts with everything and anything but what is suited to our high and princely calling in Christ Jesus, is as glaring an absurdity as that of a man of rank disgracing himself to the sordid pleasures of the lowest rabble. Thus Nero went up and down Greece, and challenged the fiddlers at their trade. Æropus, a Macedonian king, made lanterns. Harcatius, the king of Parthia, was a mole-catcher. Biantes, the Lydian, filed needles. Domitian amused himself with catching and killing flies.

Our design in receiving anything from God should be to render it again to him. It has been said, wicked and unthankful men are but like vapours and exhalations drawn out of the earth, which do but eclipse the sun which raises them : so is it when God raises up these men by his bounty and goodness, who, by their wickedness and ingratitude, stain and eclipse his glory in the world. Whereas godly men are like rivers, which, as they receive all their strength from the sea, so they return all back again to the sea ; so, whatever truly devout persons receive from God, they improve all for, and return all back again unto him.

A good man, though unlearned in secular matters, is like the windows of the temple, narrow without, and broad within ;—he sees not so much of what profits not abroad ; but whatsoever is within, and concerns religion, and many ways of glorifying God, that he sees with a broad inspection ; but all human learning without God is but blindness and ignorant folly.

I have been watching the smoke as it went up from the numerous chimneys around me ; there was scarcely any air, yet how obediently it moved in the direction of the

softest breeze! So it is with the regenerate soul, when God breathes upon its renewed powers. "He makes it willing in the day of his power."

A believer only can extract profit and sweetness from God's creatures. It is not every fly which can extract honey from the sweetest flower, though a bee can do it from that which we call a weed. An ignorant countryman hath a meadow which abounds with a variety of herbs—he can make no other use of them than to feed his cattle; or if he walk into his garden, he can only smell the sweetest of the flowers; but a skilful chemist knows their *use*, and can extract many a wholesome remedy for diseases from them.—SPENCER.

A worldly man, indeed, like a mole or bat, or some short-sighted animal, sees no objects or prospects of welfare but such as apply immediately to bodily sense; but the real Christian having reached, and being elevated on the sublime top of truth, looks by *faith*, as through an unerring telescope, over the low and narrow bounds of earth and time, beholds the everlasting hills of that land which is far off, and contemplates with joy the inheritance.

A good man is not infallible; a good man may err, may fall; but there is life in that man, there is a principle in that man; *fainting is not dying*. The bough may be borne down by the violence of the flood, but when the pressure has rolled off, it will regain its erectness, and point towards heaven.

The grateful soul of a healthy Christian is not a desert that drinks of the dews of heaven, and produces no verdure in return, but every cloud seems to drop upon it fatness and fertility; so that each season of spiritual enjoyment is followed by some instance of grace, and zeal for the glory of his Redeemer. His piety is such, that like the rose he breathes forth sweetness of his very nature; not the sickliness of a fulsome profession, but the healthy perfume of a tree the Lord has planted, and is nurturing to his own glory.

There is ever a fresh fragrance flowing from the rose of Sharon, increasing in sweetness: so is it with the Christian,

whose heart is filled with love to Christ, because he is of one spirit with Christ. There is a holy atmosphere, as it were, about him. Wherever he goes, he is a blessing. He is like a fragrant flower brought into a room, the refreshing odour of which diffuses itself among all the company. He is like the sandal tree, which diffuses its fragrance to everything that touches it.

The difference between a Christian with trials and afflictions, and contending under them, and a Christian without them, is like the difference between a soldier on the parade going through his exercise, and a soldier on the battle plain.

When Henry the Fourth, the king of France, was told of the king of Spain's ample dominions, he said, "He is king of Castile, and I am king of France; he is king of Navarre, and I am king of France; he is king of Naples, and I am king of France; he is king of Sicily, Nova Scotia, Hispaniola, and of the Western Indies, and I am king of France." He thought the kingdom of France equivalent to all those. So let the soul of every good Christian solace itself against all the wants of this mortal pilgrimage in this life, that it is a member of the church: one hath more learning or wit, yet I am a Christian; another hath more honour or preferment in the world, yet I am a Christian; another hath more silver and gold, and riches, yet I am a Christian; another hath large possessions, yet I have an inheritance in heaven, I am a Christian. Were but this consideration of the true Christian's worth laid in the balance of the sanctuary, it would weigh down all temporary conceits whatsoever.—
SPENCER.

Many there are that are accounted deep scholars, great linguists, excellent mathematicians, sharp logicians, cunning politicians, fine rhetoricians, sweet musicians, &c. These for the most part spend all their time to delight themselves and please others, catching at the shadow, and losing the substance; they study the circumstance of these arts, but omit the pith and marrow of them; whereas he is the best grammarian, that hath learnt to speak the truth from his heart; the best astronomer, that hath his conversation in

heaven; the best musician, that hath learnt to sing the praises of his God; the best arithmetician, that numbereth his days, he that amendeth his life, and groweth every day better and better; he is cunning in the ethics, that traineth up his family in the fear of the Lord; he is the best economist who is wise to salvation, prudent in giving and taking good counsel; he is the best politician, and he is a good linguist, that speaks the language of Canaan; thus the best Christian is the best artist.—IBID.

Our common law distinguisheth between two manner of freeholders; a freeholder, indeed, when a man hath made his entry upon lands, and is thereof really seized; a freeholder in law, when a man hath right to possession, but hath not made his actual entry; so is the kingdom of heaven ours; ours in the inheritance of the possession, though not in the possession of the inheritance; we are heirs to it, though now we be but wards. Our minority bids and binds us to be servants, Gal. iv.; but when we come to full years, a perfect growth in godliness, then we shall have a plenary possession.—IBID.

The faithful in Scripture are compared oftentimes to trees, which, though they be well rooted, yet may be shaken; and to Noah's ark, which, though it was a safe harbour, yet it was tossed; and to a house built on a rock, which, though it be firm, and cannot be removed, yet it may be moved; and to stars, which, though they be heavenly, yet are twinkling; and, among them, much to the moon, which with her light hath yet some dark spots.—IBID.

The life of the active Christian is the labour of the bee, which all day long is flying from the hive to the flower, and from the flower to the hive; but all his business is confined to fragrancy, and productive of sweets. There are many promises made to perseverance in the divine life, and this is one. "Then shall we follow on to know the Lord; his going forth is prepared as the morning, and he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth." The believer shall bring forth his fruit in due season.

If men have been termed pilgrims, and life a journey,

then we may add that the christian pilgrimage far surpasses all others in the following important particulars: in the goodness of the road—in the beauty of the prospects—in the excellence of the company—and in the vast superiority of the accommodation provided for the christian traveller when he has finished his course.

A man and a beast may stand upon the same mountain, and even touch one another; yet they are in two different worlds: the beast perceives nothing but the grass; but the man contemplates the prospect, and thinks of a thousand remote things. Thus a Christian may be solitary at a full exchange: he can converse with the people there upon trade, politics, and the stocks; but they cannot talk with him upon *the peace of God which passeth all understanding*.

As the natural appetite is carried out towards food, though we should not reflect on the necessity of it for the preservation of our lives; so are the regenerate carried with a natural and unforced propension towards that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are many times of great use to excite and stir up this inward principle, especially in its infancy and weakness, when it is often so languid that the man himself can scarce discern it, hardly being able to move one step forward, but when he is pushed by his hopes or his fears, by the pressure of an affliction, or the sense of a mercy, by the authority of the law, or the persuasion of others. But he who is utterly destitute of this inward principle, and doth not aspire unto it, but contents himself with those performances whereunto he is prompted by education or custom, by the fear of hell, or carnal notions of heaven, can no more be called a religious person, than a puppet can be called a man. This forced and artificial religion is commonly heavy and languid, like the motion of a weight forced upwards; it is cold and spiritless, like the uneasy compliance of a wife married against her will, who carries it dutifully towards her husband, whom she doth not love, out of some sense of virtue and honour. Hence all this religion is scant and niggardly, especially in those duties which do greatest violence to men's carnal inclinations; and those slavish spirits will be sure to do no more than is absolutely required:

it is a law that compels them, and they will be loath to go beyond what it stints them to ; nay, they will be ever putting such glosses on it as may leave themselves the greatest liberty : whereas the spirit of true religion is frank and liberal, far from such peevish and narrow reckoning ; and he who hath given himself entirely unto God, will never think he doth too much for him.

For an old Christian to say to a young one, "Stand in my eminence," is like a man who has with difficulty climbed by a ladder or scaffolding to the top of the house, and cries to one at the bottom, "This is the place for a prospect, come up at a step."

All believers, from the bruised reed to the tallest cedar ; from the smoking flax on earth to the flaming lamp in heaven ; from Thomas, who would not believe without seeing, to Abraham, who could believe without staggering—all are in a state of life : and all, from the most beautiful moralist to the meanest reptile in *nature's fields* ; from the young man in the Gospel, who was not far from the kingdom of God, to Judas, who was in the very bottom of hell—all are in a state of death.

We have seen the master of a vessel act for the most part as his own pilot. His other cares and pursuits have been various. Sometimes he has been directing the repair of a mast, the use of a sail, the display of a signal ; sometimes making preparations for the comfort of his crew or passengers ; sometimes engaged in a hearty repast ; now using his telescope, and now in lively conversation ; *but still his hand was on the helm*, or not far off, and *his whole days were days of pilotage*.

A Persian king, willing to oblige his courtiers, gave to one a golden cup, and to the other a kiss ; and he that had the former complained to the king that his fellow's kiss was more to be valued than his golden cup. Christ does not put off his people with the golden cup, but he gives them his kiss, which is infinitely better. He gives his best gifts to his best beloved ones ; he gives his best love, his best joy, his best peace, his best mercies.—SPENCER.

O believer, what matters it if God denies thee a kid to

make merry; when he says, "Son, thou art ever with me, and all that I have is thine?" Hath a son any cause to complain that his father denies him a flower in the garden, when he makes him heir of his whole estate?

God's people below are kings incog. They are travelling, disguised like pilgrims, to their dominions above. Once a king unto God, always so. God does not make kings for the devil to unmake at his pleasure. If you are spiritual kings, *be holy*. Should I meet a person all in dirt and rags, I should be mad, was I to take that person for a king or a queen. Nor can I believe you to be royally descended, or crowned for the skies, unless you carry the marks of royalty in your life and conversation. If any of God's anointed kings so far forget their dignity as to live in sin, their throne will shake; the crown will tremble on their heads; they will be driven from their palace for a time, like David when he fled from Absalom, and went weeping over the brook Kedron. But, like David, they shall be brought back again to Jerusalem, (*for Christ will not lose the purchase of his blood,*) though not until they have severely smarted for it.

Little more can be said concerning the generality of men, than that they lived, and sinned, and died, and perished. But concerning all God's people it may be said, that they lived, were converted, preserved to the end, and went to heaven.

In the present state, the least part of the saint's worth is visible. As the earth is fruitful in plants and flowers, but its riches are in mines of precious metal, and the veins of marble hidden in its bosom; true grace appears in sensible actions, *but its glory is within*. The sincerity of aims, the purity of affection, the impresses of the Spirit on the heart, the interior beauties of holiness, are only seen by God. Besides, such is the humility of eminent saints, that the more they abound in spiritual treasures, the less they show; as the heavenly bodies, when in nearest conjunction with the sun, and fullest of light, make the least appearance to our sight.

The believer's thoughts are as sunbeams, fierce as glowing flame; discerning and quick as the eagle's piercing eye, and

vast as heaven's expanse. Earth rolls beneath, while on the rapid wings of faith he flies up to the centre of immortal bliss, and basks in the full beams of God's love—but not always !

The christian life has been compared to a beautiful column, whose summit points always to heaven. The innocent and real pleasures of this world are the ornaments on its pedestal, very pleasing to behold when the eye is near, but which should not too long, nor too frequently, detain us from that just distance where we can contemplate the whole column, and where the little ornaments on its base vanish and disappear.

Hast thou passed by the hedge-row at eventide ? and has a delicious fragrancy been all about thee, and thou knewest not whence it came ? Hast thou searched and found the sweet violets hidden beneath its leaves, and known that it was that which gave its odour to the air around thee ? Thus should the Christian make sweet the place of his abode with the perfume of his good deeds ; and thus, in all humility, should he endeavour to remain unnoticed himself. When thou seest the hungry fed, and the naked clothed, the sick man visited, and the widow comforted—search, and thou shalt find the flower whence all this odour arose : thou shalt find full often that the Christian hath been there constrained by the love of Christ. Awake, O north wind, and come, thou south ; blow upon my garden, that the spices thereof may flow out. Cant. iv. 16. But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth : that thine arms may be in secret : and thy Father which seeth in secret, himself shall reward thee openly. Matt. vi. 3. 4. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matt. v. 16.

Some Christians are like decayed milestones ; which stand, it is true, in the right road, and bear some traces of the proper impression ; but so wretchedly mutilated and defaced, that they who go by, can hardly read or know what to make of them.

A very remarkable circumstance is related concerning

Monsieur Huet, the learned Bishop of Avanches. During the latter years of his life, his genius and memory gradually failed; but two or three hours before his death, being then in the ninety-first year of his age, his genius revived, his memory returned, and he enjoyed all his mental faculties in their original vigour. So, with the people of God, faith, hope, love, joy, and other gracious fruits of the Spirit, may seem to decline; but before a saint expires, they all flourish again, in as great or greater liveliness than ever. God does not take away his children until he has given them a lightening before death.

The design of God is to make every saint like Christ: this was resolved from eternity. Rom. viii. 29. Now, as the limner looks on the person whose picture he would take, and draws his lines to answer him with the nearest similitude that may be; so doth God look on Christ as the archetype to which he will conform the saint, in suffering, in grace, and in glory; yet so, that Christ hath the pre-eminence in all. Every saint must suffer, because Christ suffered: Christ must not have a delicate body under a crucified head, yet never any suffered, or could, what he endured. Christ is holy, and therefore so shall every saint be, but in an inferior degree. An image cut in clay cannot be so exact as that which is engraved in gold.

A Christian is like the rose that drinks the dew as the sun-beam opens all its folds, then sheds a grateful fragrance on the wings of every gentle breeze which blows across it. Like also the rose, which spreads its varied colours to the sight of each beholding eye, proclaiming thus His glory; the glory of Him who sustains the shining sun, and sends refreshing morn and evening dew. So, the believer drinking of the flowing streams of love divine, the pure heart-cheering promises of grace, with generous heart and bounteous hand, diffuses blessings like a fragrance around him, and blesses the place where he dwells.

Even as it was with Christ, the Jews rolled a great stone upon him, and, as they thought, it was impossible he should rise again; but an angel came and rolled away the stone, and he arose in a most triumphant manner. So shall it be

with the people of God ; their good name lies oft buried, a stone of obloquy and reproach is rolled upon them ; but, at the day of judgment, not an angel, but God himself, will roll away the stone, and they shall come forth from *among the pots*, where they have been blacked and sullied, as the *wings of a dove covered with silver, and her feathers with yellow gold*. Now it is, that many of these are called the *troublers of Israel*, seditious, factious, malignants, rebellious, and what not. But a day is shortly coming, when God himself will proclaim their innocency ; for the name of a saint is precious in God's esteem ; it is like a statue of gold, which the polluted breath of men cannot stain ; and though the wicked may throw dust upon it, yet as God will wipe away tears from the eyes of his people, so he will wipe off the dust that lies upon their good names ; and a happy day must that needs be, when God himself shall be the saint's compurgator.

Mrs. Willet made a query unto her husband Dr. Willet, then lying on his deathbed, touching the mutual knowledge that the saints in glory have one of another. Such another question having been proposed to Luther, he answered, (unto which Chemnitius and many others do subscribe,) that as Adam, in the estate of innocency, when *God* first presented Eve unto him, whom he had never seen before, asked not whence she came, but said, *This is bone of my bone, and flesh of my flesh* ; even so the saints of God in heaven, beautifully illuminated with knowledge beyond Adam's in his first condition, shall know those not only whom here they knew not, but even those whom before they never saw.

To a discerning eye there will ever be that in the true believer's walk and conversation which will distinguish him from the mere professor, who apes his language and manners. The difference will be that between a studied and natural movement. The believer, in his most careless course, will evidence his heavenly origin ; the other his vile and earthly nature still unchanged. So a race-horse is graceful in his swiftest pace, and, though pushed to his utmost speed, will not be awkward, because that would be unnatural to him, and a denial of his breed. A cart-horse might perhaps be

taught to play tricks in the riding-school, and might prance and curvet like his betters, but at some unlucky time would be sure to betray the baseness of his original.

Amidst the desolation which seems to overspread the face of nature at the approach of winter, all trees do not equally participate in it. Some are by habit evergreens, and retain a perennial verdure. And what a happy emblem do these afford us of the manner in which God preserves the graces and virtues of his people, still flourishing and green, as it were, when all around them is barren and desolate ! Noah, Joseph, Daniel, and many besides, perhaps in every age of the world, have been thus suffered to stand as illustrious monuments of holiness : men perfect in their generations, whilst the people among whom they lived were grievously corrupt. It is to be remembered, then, that those who would resemble them, who would flourish like the fir-tree, or the laurel, amidst the storms and frosts of winter, must have no fellowship with an evil and adulterous generation ; for it is written, "The Lord hath set apart him that is godly for himself," and he only is pronounced "blessed, who walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful ; whose delight is in the law of the Lord, and who meditates in his law day and night." This man shall be an evergreen indeed. To him alone the promise belongs — "He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season : his leaf also shall not wither ; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper."—LIGHT FROM THE WEST.

The true believer who belongs to Christ cannot any longer be subdued, and held under the dominion of sin. He is not a conquered man, but one who is, and must be, "more than conqueror" under the "Captain of his salvation." Every renewed person is like a soldier in an army which is crowned with victories ; and under a general who is leading it on to certain conquest, which, though it is worsted in an occasional skirmish, yet succeeds in the regular engagement, and remains master of the field. But the unbeliever, who is without union with Christ, is like one of an army that has been continually beaten and disgraced, which has no confi-

dence in its commander, and is therefore dispirited with the certainty of continual defeat.

Mercury's appearances (like those of our moon) are various, according to his situation in respect of the sun. Sometimes he seems quite dark; at others, falcated, or horned; and sometimes shining fully, or with an hemisphere entirely illuminated. In the present stages of spiritual experience, the believer's interior comfort, and his exterior lustre, greatly depend on the position of his heart towards the uncreated Sun of Righteousness. How obscure and benighted are our views, and how languid our exercise of grace, when an unbelieving, a worldly, or a careless spirit interrupts our walk with God! But if the outgoings of our souls are to him, and if the in-pourings of his blessed influences be felt, we glow, we kindle, we burn, we shine. This may be called (to borrow an astronomical phrase) our superior conjunction with the sun; and at those distinguished seasons of peace and joy in the Holy Ghost,

"Clearly we see and win our way,
Shining unto the perfect day,
And more than conquer all."

The solar light and heat on Venus are estimated to be four times greater than on the planet inhabited by us. Why? Because her distance from the source of both is considerably less than ours. In like manner, bright evidences and warm experiences of our interest in Christ, and of the work of his Spirit upon our souls, are generally the blessed consequences of living near to God, and of walking closely with him, in all holy conversation, prayer, and watchful godliness. The joy and liveliness of grace (though not grace itself) may be sinned away. Spiritual comfort is a tender plant, and requires much delicacy of treatment. To be triumphant and alert in the ways of God, you must take equal heed of wandering, and of slumbering.

We will suppose that some opulent person makes the tour of Europe. If his money fall short, he comforts himself with reflecting that he has a sufficient stock in the bank, which he can draw out at any time by writing to his cashiers. This is just the case, spiritually, with God's elect. They

are travellers in a foreign land, remote from home. Their treasure is in heaven, and God himself is their banker. When their graces seem to be almost spent and exhausted, when the barrel of meal and cruise of oil appear to be failing, they need but draw upon God by prayer and faith, and humble waiting. The Holy Spirit will honour their bill at sight ; and issue to them, from time to time, sufficient remittances to carry them to their journey's end.

Blindness, Spiritual.

The eagle, before he setteth upon the hart, rolleth himself in the sand, and then flieth at the stag's head, and, by fluttering his wings, so dusts his eyes that he can see nothing, and so striketh him with his talons where he listeth. Now as the sand and the dust with this eagle, so the devil filleth his wings with earthly desires, and sensual pleasures, wherewith, after he hath put out the eyes of the carnal man, he dealeth with him at his pleasure. Mercury could not kill Argus till he had cast him into a sleep, and with an enchanted rod closed his eyes ; and the devil cannot hurt any man, till he has lulled him asleep in security.—SPENCER.

When Xeuxes drew his masterpiece, and Nicostratus fell into admiration of the rareness thereof, highly commending the exquisiteness of the work, there stood by a rich ignorant man who would needs know what he had discovered worthy of so great applause ; to whom Nicostratus made this answer, " My friend, couldest thou see with my eyes, thou wouldest soon see cause enough to wonder as well as I do." Thus it is that the dear children of God have inexhaustible treasure, even in the midst of their poverty ; transcendent dignity in the midst of their disgrace ; height of tranquillity in the very depth of tribulation ; their pulse and locusts relish better than all the glutton's delicious fare ; their sheepskins, goatskins, and camel's hair wear finer than all their purple

and soft raiment ; the world's hate makes them happier than all the applauses of the Capitol. Now the sensual, carnal naturalist sees none of all this, he perceives not the things of the Spirit ; neither indeed can he, for they are spiritually discerned ; no man knows them, but he that hath them. —IBID.

It is the misfortune of some to be afflicted with that kind of defective sight which prevents them from seeing to an ordinary distance ; they are unable to distinguish the most towering and colossal objects if placed at a short remove, while the merest atom brought close to the eye is magnified as with a microscope. An affliction analogous to this in the moral sight, but pregnant with incomparably greater danger, is the universal malady of mankind ; and our Lord insists on the urgency of its removal. He finds them mistaking phantoms for realities, and realities for phantoms ; calling an atom a world, and a world an atom ; practising on themselves an endless succession of delusions ; and he gives them the alternative of a remedy, or death. He approaches them while gazing on the near prospectus of time, and by raising and extending the point of sight he adds eternity to the view, and leaves them lost in the contemplation of a boundless eternity.—HARRIS.

Worldly men want the faculty by which religious truths are apprehended : and unless a thing is apprehended by its appropriate faculty, it cannot suitably affect us. If we see and handle a fine fruit, we may be pleased with its shape, its colour, and its smell. But unless we taste it, we have had no notion of the real, peculiar, and distinctive excellence of the thing. A deaf man may behold a grand display of orchestral arrangements, and musical performers, and think it an imposing sight. But the thing intended by all this—the end of all this apparatus—the melodious enchantment—the harmonious sound, is still a stranger to his soul. Here, then, is the secret of that otherwise inexplicable riddle, that man, rational, immortal man, should value time above eternity, his body above his soul, the slightest favour from a fellow creature, above all the mercies and benefits which God can pour upon him. For the one class of ob-

jects, all men have the appropriate and discerning sense : and for the other, most men have not that sense. Human and temporal things are apprehended and taken in by the ordinary exercise of our natural faculties, and finding in all men those natural faculties, they do not fail to make their suitable impressions. Eternal and divine things are, on the other hand, addressed to a faculty above nature, a principle dead or dormant in the great mass of mankind ; and consequently, fall pointless and powerless upon the mind ; and are like sounds to the deaf, or light and colours to the blind.

Blessings.

When I see leaves drop from their trees in the beginning of autumn, just such, think I, is the friendship of the world ; just such are the comforts and joys of this life. While the sap of maintenance lasts, my friends will swarm in abundance, my joys and comforts will abide with me ; but when the sap ceases, the spring which supplies them fails ; in the winter of my need they leave me naked. And those few leaves which I see falling, remind me of the coming winds, and rains, when those trees shall be wholly stripped of their leaves ; and of that season, that evil day, when all that administers to the gaiety and comfort of life shall fall from under me. Happy he who has that "friend," which, saith the Scriptures, "sticketh closer than a brother," and that peace, and those pleasures, which are at God's right hand, and which shall never fade away.

Man is placed on an arena, with a thousand objects which seek to captivate his attention. He is a candidate for happiness, which must be infallibly determined by his choice. The world offers to him its attractions and prizes. Religion seeks to woo him with her present joys, and her hope of glory. We should consider this world as a great

mart of commerce, where Providence exposes to our view various commodities, riches, ease, tranquillity, fame, integrity, knowledge. Everything is marked at a settled price. Our time, our labour, our ingenuity, are so much ready money, which we are to lay out to the best advantage. Examine, compare, choose, reject, but stand to your own judgment; and do not, like children, when you have purchased one thing, repine that you do not possess another which you did not purchase. Such is the force of well-regulated industry, that a steady and vigorous exertion of our faculties, directed to one end, will generally insure success. Would you, for instance, be rich? Do you think that single point worth the sacrificing everything else to? You may then be rich. Thousands have become so from the lowest beginnings, by toil, and patient diligence and attention to the minutest articles of expense and profit. But you must give up the pleasures of leisure, of a vacant mind, of a free, unsuspicious temper. If you preserve your integrity, it must be a coarse-spun and vulgar honesty. Those high and lofty notions of morals which you brought with you from the schools must be considerably lowered, and mixed with the baser alloy of a jealous and worldly-minded prudence. You must learn to do hard, if not unjust things; and for the nice embarrassments of a delicate and ingenuous spirit, it is necessary for you to get rid of them as fast as possible. You must shut your heart against the Muses, and be content to feed your understanding with plain household truths. In short, you must not attempt to enlarge your ideas, or polish your taste, or refine your sentiments; but must keep on in one beaten track, without turning aside either to the right hand or to the left. "But I cannot submit to drudgery like this. I feel a spirit above it." 'Tis well: be above it then; only do not repine that you are not rich. Is knowledge the pearl of price? That too may be purchased, by steady application and long solitary hours of study and reflection. Bestow these, and you shall be wise. But (says the man of letters) what a hardship is it, that many an illiterate fellow, who cannot construe the motto of the arms

on his coach, shall raise a fortune and make a figure, while I have little more than the necessities of life! *Et tibi magna satis!* Was it in order to raise a fortune that you consumed the sprightly hours of youth in study and retirement? Was it to be rich, that you grew pale over the midnight lamp, and distilled the sweetness from the Greek and Roman spring? You have then mistaken your path, and ill employed your industry. What reward have I then for all my labours? What reward! A cultivated mind, and a conscious dignity of superior intelligence; and what reward can you ask besides? But is it not some reproach upon the economy of Providence that such a one, who is a mean dirty fellow, should have amassed wealth enough to buy half a nation? Not in the least. He made himself a mean dirty fellow for that very end. He has paid his health, his liberty for it; and will you envy him his bargain? Will you hang your head, and blush in his presence, because he outshines you in equipage and show? Say to yourself, I have not these things, it is true, but it is because I have not sought, because I have not desired them; I have chosen my lot, I am content and satisfied. But, whatever you have sought of this world's attainments, the time may come when you may awake to the fact of your utter poverty of the "unsearchable riches of Christ," and that you have gained none of the prizes of the world to come. To be consistent you must say, Well, be it so. I have not sought, but neglected them. I cannot expect to be possessed of that, to obtain which, demands labour and pains. This has been bestowed upon other objects, and I have my reward; I reap that which I have sown. I made my choice, and must not complain. In saying this, you will be only speaking the language of common sense.

We would think that beggar intolerably impudent that coming to our door to ask an alms, and when we have bestowed upon him some broken bread and meat, yet, like those impudent persons the psalmist speaks of, that grudge and grumble if they be not satisfied, if they have not their own will, he should not hold himself contented,

unless he might have one of our best dishes from the table. But this is the case of very many amongst us. We come all as so many beggars to God's mercy-seat. And God gives us abundance of many good things, as life, liberty, health of body; yet we cannot be quiet, nor think ourselves well, unless we be clothed in purple, and fare deliciously every day, as such and such do; not considering, in the mean time, many that are below us, and above us too, wanting those things which we comfortably enjoy.—SPENCER.

Bigots.

Bigots are stiff, straitened, and confined; like Egyptian mummies, which are bound round with thousands of yards of ribbon.

Bigots are like some trees that grow by the sea-shore; which do not spread their branches equally on all sides, but are blown awry, and stand entirely one way.

Young converts are generally great bigots. When we are first converted to God, our brotherly affection too often resembles the narrowness of a river at its first setting out. But, as we advance nearer to the great ocean of all good, the channel widens, and our hearts expand, more and more; until death perfectly unites us to the source of uncreated love.

For wolves to devour sheep, is no wonder: but for sheep to devour one another, is monstrous and astonishing.

Backsliders.

The case of backsliders is most dangerous. A tree may be stripped of its foliage, and cast its leaves at the fall of the year, but it awaits the time of revival, the time of spring. But his condition is infinitely more mournful than any-

thing which is presented by the falling leaf, and the barren and naked branches of the trees of the forest. The forest will burst forth into fresh verdure, under the genial influence of spring; but who can say that those hearts will ever flourish again in the beauty of holiness, which have long lain withering under the curse of sin and unbelief? He only who knows all hearts can determine how far a sinner may go till he places himself beyond the hope of mercy; but no man can receive the grace of God in vain, and to every man the warning voice of God is addressed, "Now also the axe is laid at the root of the tree; every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire."—Matt. iii. 10.

A church is sometimes astounded by the fall of some professor in it: this is the fruit, not the seed or beginning, of backsliding. So a man is laid on a sick bed, but the disorder has only now arrived at its crisis, it has for some time been working in his system, and has at last burst out and laid him low. So the sin of departing from God, and secretly declining, has been going on while the profession has still been maintained—the process of backsliding has been working silently, yet *surely*, until a temptation has at last opened the way for its bursting forth, to the scandal of God's people and true religion. "He that despiseth small things shall fall by little and little." *In the sight of God* the man was fallen before, *we only now* have first discovered it.

The beginnings of declensions from Christ and the gospel are deep and hidden, because oftentimes they are carried on by very secret and *imperceptible degrees*. Some men are plunged into apostasy by some notorious crimes, or by the power of some great temptations. The fall of such men from their profession is like the dying of a man by a fever; the first incursion of the disease, with its whole progress, is manifest. The spiritual decays of others is like an hectic distemper, which at first is hardly known, and in its progress hardly cured. Small negligences and omissions are admitted, and the soul is habituated to them, and so a progress is made to greater evils. Besides, revolvers and back

sliders do their utmost endeavours to hide the beginnings of their falls from themselves and others. By false and corrupt reasonings they labour to 'blind their own eyes, and to hide these evils from themselves.' Their own hearts seduce them, before they 'feed on ashes.' Like a consumption which continues to gain ground, while the patient is unwilling to believe the truth of his case till it is too late; such, too often, is the fatal issue of backsliding.

Body.

There is a parable of a woman, who travelling with child brought forth twins, and both children being presented to her, she falls deeply and fondly in love with the one, but is careless and disrespectful of the other. This she will nurse herself, but that is put forth; her love grows up with the child she kept herself; she decks it fine, she feeds it choicely; but at last, by overmuch pampering of it, the child surfeits, becomes mortally sick, and when it was dying she remembers herself, and sends to look after the other child that was at nurse, to the end she might now cherish it. But when the messenger came, she finds it dying likewise, and, examining the truth, she understands that, through the mother's carelessness and neglect to look after it, the poor child was starved. Thus was the fond partial mother, to her great grief, sorrow, and shame, deprived of both the hopeful babes at once—the fruit of her weak and foolish choice. And thus, every Christian is this mother, the children are our body and soul; the former of these it is that men and women fall deeply and fondly in love with, whilst indeed they are careless and neglect the other; this they dress and feed; nothing is too good, or too dear for it; but at the last the body comes, by some means or other, to its deathbed, when there is very little or no hope of life. Then men begin to remember the soul, and would think of some course to save it; the minister is sent for in all haste to look after it; but, alas, he finds it in part dead, in part dying; and the very

truth is, the owner, through neglect and carelessness, hath starved the soul, and it is ready to go to hell before the body is fit for the grave; and so the foolish fond Christian, to his eternal shame and sorrow, loseth both his body and soul for ever.—SPENCER.

The Jews have a story of a woman that took two children to nurse, the one very mean, deformed, crooked, blind, and not likely to live long; the other as goodly a child as may be, beautiful, well-favoured, and likely to be long lived. Now this foolish woman, bestowing all her care and diligence, pains and attendance, upon the worst child, never so much as minding the best, must needs be ignorant and very foolish in so bad a choice, and of so great neglect. Thus it is, that the most of men are herein to be reprov'd, who, having taken two children to nurse, viz. their body and their soul, and well knowing that the soul is infinitely better than the body, more beautiful, and of longer continuance, yet like the foolish nurse they bestow all their care, labour, and pains for the worst; they make provision for the flesh, pamper the body which must ere long lie down in the dust, and starve the soul which doth and must live for ever.—IBID.

It is said that swine, especially the wild boar, are of that strange quickness of scent, that if the huntsman means to shoot him, he must take the wind of him, or else he will wind him out and begone. Now, on the contrary, they are not so sensible of the ill savour of a dunghill, nor the stench of mud and mire, but rather take delight to lie wallowing therein, esteeming it as a great recreation, and refreshing unto them. This is a figure of a filthy, foul sinner, who will fly a thousand miles from the perils and dangers of his body; so that he may sleep in a whole skin, he cares for no more; but, in the mean time, takes delight and pleasure in those pollutions and uncleannesses which defile his soul.—IBID.

There was a master of a family, who committed the custody of his orchard unto two of his servants, whereof the one was blind, and the other lame. The lame servant being in love with the beauty of the fruit, presently told his blind fellow, that if he had but the use of his limbs and his feet

to walk as he had, it should not be long ere he would be master of those apples. The blind man answered, he had as good a mind to enjoy them as himself, and if his eyes had not failed him, they had not rested all that while upon the tree; wherefore they both agreed to unite their strength, and join their forces together; the whole blind man took the well-sighted lame man upon his shoulders, and so they reached the apples, and conveyed their master's fruit away; but being impeached for their fault, and examined by their master, each one framed his own excuse. The blind man said, he could not so much as see the tree whereon they grew, and therefore it was plain he could have none of them. The lame man said he could not be suspected, because he had no limbs to climb, or to stand to reach them; but now the wise master perceiving the subtle craft of the two false servants, put them as they were, one upon the other's shoulders, and so punished them both together. Thus it is, that sin is neither of the body without the soul, nor of the soul without the body; but it is a common act both of body and soul; they are like Simeon and Levi, brothers and partners in every mischief; like Hippocrates' twins, they do commonly will and nill the same thing; therefore God in his judgment will punish both body and soul together, if they be not repaired and redeemed by Christ.—IBID.

Censure.

Mercury, though scarcely discernible, is sometimes seen like a dark spot on the sun's disc, as he passes between him and us. The transit of this planet is said to have been observed by Gassendi in the year 1632. Thus the illumined side of Mercury commonly eludes our notice; but his dark hemisphere excites our attention, and strikes our view. We too frequently act a similar part by each other. A fellow Christian, or any conspicuous character, may shine unre-

garded ; whereas, if his brightness becomes in any respect clouded and overcast, our telescopes are up, our eyes in full employ, our tongues proclaim his defects ; and it is well if magnifying and multiplying glasses do not lend their assistance on the occasion.

To those who have hitherto been verily guilty concerning their brother, who have thoughtlessly and unprofitably spent many an hour in either repeating or listening with delight to a tale of scandal, and who have been thought vastly clever and amusing from their sharp sayings about their neighbours, the following little incident may serve as a useful hint :—A man walking through the street had a wallet or sack on his shoulders, with a sort of pocket at each end ; one part hung down before and the other behind him ; some little boys ran after him, and slyly put feathers and rags into the hind pocket, but the man was not aware of the matter. Now, thought I, if he were to turn the wallet he would see what sort of stuff he was carrying, and how ridiculous his appearance. This, then, is just what the world does : we carry a wallet ; in the pocket before we put our neighbour's faults, which are continually before our eyes, and in the hind pocket we put our own faults, and therefore know not how they are laughed at. Could we turn the wallet, we should be silent. When, therefore, you find yourself talking of others, turn the wallet.—LIGHT FROM THE WEST.

When the tongue scatters its deadly poison so openly abroad as to obtain for the individual the character of a slanderer, people are on their guard ; they expect bitter waters from such a fountain, and when the foul stream splashes over a honeycomb, (a pure character,) it will not in any man's estimation detract from the inherent sweetness of the mass. But there is another species of malignity, which, instead of bubbling out in open day, warning all to stand aloof from its contamination, glides steadily, in darkness, to deposit its spawn, leaving the unsuspected brood to come forth in due time, and prosecute the work of treacherous demolition. This is the *moth*. Forgetting "whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off," he whispereth the tale, guards it with injunction, to caution and silence. and

does the very work of his prototype the moth, as though the lesson had been deliberately taken from that covert destroyer.

—CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH.

Luther said in his time, “the thief wrongs one, the adulterer wrongs two, the slanderer wrongs three, but I think four—himself, the person abused, the bystander, and the precious NAME OF GOD.”

It is commonly known, that scarabs and flies swarm to the galled part of a poor packhorse, and there sit feeding upon that worst part of the flesh; not once *meddling* with the other sound part of his skin. Even thus do malicious tongues of detractors; if a man have any infirmity in his person or actions, that they will be sure to gather unto, and dwell upon; whereas, his commendable parts, and well deservings, are passed by without mention, without regard; and what do they get by it? It must needs be a filthy creature that is always feeding on stinking carrion.—SPENCER.

Church.

There is much waste ground in the world that hath no power; our globe can tell us of a great part that hath no inhabitant, no name; but a vineyard was never without a possessor. Come we into some wild Indian forest, all furnished with goodly trees, we know not whether man were there; God's hand, we are sure, hath been there, perhaps not man's; but if you come into a well-dressed vineyard or garden, there you may see the hillocks equally swelling, the stakes pitched in a just height and distance, the vines handsomely pruned, the hedge-rows cut, the weeds cast out; now we are ready to conclude, as the philosopher did when he found figures, here hath been a man, yea, and a good husbandman too. Thus it is, that as God's Israel, God's church is a vineyard, so we may safely conclude that it is God's vineyard, God's church, God's in a more special manner. It is true that there is a universal providence of God

over all the world ; but there is a more especial hand and eye of God over his church ; in it God taketh a peculiar interest. Solomon may let out his vineyard to keepers, but God keeps his church in his own hands ; he may use the help of men, but it must be as tools, as his agents, he works by them, they cannot work but by him ; so that, in spite of the gates of hell, his church, his vine, shall flourish. Even so, “return, O God of hosts, look down from heaven, and visit this vineyard of ours, thy church, which thy right hand hath planted, and the branch which thou hast made strong for thyself.”—SPENCER.

A physician letteth a man bleed by the application of leeches, and they suck much blood from him ; but the physician's ends are one thing, and the leeches' ends are another ; the leeches draw blood from the man only to satisfy themselves ; but the physician letteth the man bleed to cure his distemper. Such is the difference between God's ends and wicked men's ends in the persecution of his people. God, by suffering his own church and people to be persecuted, it is to purge away their evil distempers of sin and security, or whatsoever it is that may offend, that thereby he may make his people better by their afflictions ; but wicked and ungodly men, by troubling the church, it is to destroy them, and root them out, that they may be no more a people, to accomplish their own wicked designs, and testify their rage and malice upon them in their utter ruin and overthrow. These are their ends, but God hath other ends ; as Joseph said to his brethren, you did intend me hurt, but God did intend me good ; so it may be said concerning all ungodly wicked men, they do intend evil against the church and people of God, but God intends his people's good ; they intend to persecute and destroy, but he intends (maugre all their contrivements whatsoever) to preserve, keep, and continue his church to the end of the world.—IBID.

The Samaritan's Inn was called “Open Doors,” because it gave entertainment to all strangers.—Luke x. 30, 34. In St. Peter's sheet were all sorts of creatures, four-footed beasts, and creeping things.—Acts x. 12. The net mentioned in St. Matthew's gospel caught all kind of fish.—Chap.

xiii. 47. Ahasuerus' feast welcomed all comers.—Esth. i. 4. Such is the gospel church in its amplitude; the prophetic gospel was hedged in and limited within the pale of Palestine; but the apostolical gospel is spread over the face of the whole earth; then it was a light under a bushel, now the light of the world; then the prophets sang, "In Jury is God known; his name is great in Israel;" but now we sing, Praise the Lord, all ye nations: then the name of Christ was as ointment kept close in a box; but now it is "an ointment poured out." Then the church was "a garden enclosed, a fountain sealed up;" and now it is a springing well that overflows the world to renew it, as Noah's flood did to destroy it.—IBID.

While Israel marched through the wilderness, the blackest night had a pillar of fire, and the brightest day a pillar of cloud. So in this world, things never go so well with God's Israel, but they have still something to groan under; nor so ill, but they have still comfort to be thankful for. In the church militant, as in the ark of old, there are both a rod, and a pot of manna.

The church, when religion lives in it, becomes terrible as an army with banners.—Cant. vi. 4. Upon life order will be sure to ensue, and with that goes majesty, and with that terror. There is an awful majesty, you know, sits in the face of a man, while he lives, and walks forth as God's viceroy of this lower world; but if he once become a carcass, the fowls of the air, and the beasts of the field, and even the very worms of the earth, dare prey upon him. So it is with the church; when it is dead, when religion is become a mere piece of empty, spiritless formality, this makes it look but just like other parts of the world; they will say of it, what are they better than we? The religion of Christians, if you look only to the external formalities of it, hath not so much of a superiority or higher excellency, but that it will be a disregarded thing with them who can easily distinguish between vivid religion and dead. But when the Spirit of the living God puts forth itself in discernible effects; and such as carry an awful aspect with them unto the common reason of men, religion then grows a venerable thing, and the pur-

pose of opposition and hostility is checked and countermanded, and even quite laid aside.

Take a mass of quicksilver, let it fall to the floor, and it will split itself into a vast number of distinct globules. Gather them up, and put them together again, and they will coalesce into one body, as before. Thus, God's elect below are sometimes crumbled and distinguished into various parties, though they are all, in fact, members of one and the same mystic body. But when taken up from the world, and put together in heaven, they will constitute one glorious undivided church, for ever and ever.

When Lysander the Spartan paid a visit to King Cyrus, he was particularly struck with the elegance and order, the variety and magnificence, of Cyrus' gardens. Cyrus, no less charmed with the taste and judgment of his guest, told him, with visible emotions of pleasure, "These lovely walks, with all their beauty of disposition and vastness of extent, were planned by myself; and almost every tree, shrub, and flower, which you behold, was planted by my own hand." Now, when we take a view of the church, which is at once the house and garden of the living God; that church which the Father loved, for which the Son became a man of sorrows, and which the Holy Spirit descends from heaven in all his plenitude of converting power to cultivate and build anew;—when we survey this living paradise and this mystic edifice, of which such glorious things are spoken, and on which such glorious privileges are conferred, must we not acknowledge thy sovereign hand, O uncreated Love, drew the plan of this spiritual Eden? Thy hand, Almighty Power, set every living tree, every true believer, in the courts of the Lord's house. Thy converted people are all righteous; they shall inherit the land for ever, even the branches of thy planting, the work of thy hands, that thou mayest be glorified.

Though the church of God has been designated by many beautiful and apt similes, yet there is room for many more. Compare the people of God, while on their earthly pilgrimage, to a moving train. We see it headed by Adam, who is quickly followed by a loving partner, and devoted children. While we pause, and drop a tear over the fatal con-

duct of Cain, we behold the numbers increase, and the limits extend. It fluctuates—deserters are seen, and only a little solitary company remain, to tell us that truth has not taken her final leave of this polluted world. At length, bursting out with all the grandeur and sublimity of an Enoch, we see the lovely procession extending. And, though passing onward, we behold the dark cloud of futurity for ever, as it were grasping the leaders from our visionary hold; we see others enlisting, and a glorious ray of divine pleasure beaming throughout the increasing army. But enriched heaven causes a mournful breach. Enoch is gone! The awful deluge reduces the procession to eight! But now the standard-bearers advance. And while we picture in our mind's eye the achievements of hoary patriarchs, faithful prophets, and devoted kings, we are naturally led down to the gospel era. The majestic train now is headed with all the grandeur of the *second Adam*. The contest against the powers of darkness is begun. Idols bow, temples crumble into dust. The horrors and treachery of priestcraft are laid bare, and madly seek a covert for their shame. Judaism is dethroned. In a word, the trembling pinnacle of human guilt seems to totter on its weakened pedestal, and gradually sinks into the chilling horrors of perpetual night, before the victorious arm of Immanuel. So with all its changes, down to the present day. What a period is this! The swellings of Jordan now overflow its ponderous banks, and the whole earth receives the influences of its streams. Who are the leaders *now*? Who bear the colours! Who sound the gospel cry? Who compose the train? The powerful and lengthened army now seems to wield the sword of success. We see with delight, and hear with astonishment, the victory of the Redeemer's arms. But methinks I see some backsliders in the train. They shrink and yield an easy victim at the sight of Satan. How ill their armour fits them! Such we see falling into the chaos of eternal perdition, when about to join their fellows in triumphantly entering the portals of Jerusalem.—THE PULPIT.

Let the head of a family ascend a lofty eminence, and looking on hill and dale and river, and all the beauteous

prospect which is poured in rich profusion beneath his feet, suddenly his eye is arrested by his own peaceful dwelling, where he has enjoyed the tender charities of love, where the partner of his bosom and little ones are nestled ; it is *here* his affections are drawn, here he dwells in imagination with a fondness, an interest, which creation's beauties cannot excite in him. So is it with God as it respects his beloved Zion. The infinite Jehovah, who has called forth at his bidding creation's glories—the great Father of his family, which he has adopted in Christ Jesus, surveys creation—looks down upon the world, but sees no object round the spacious globe from east to west, from pole to pole, so fair in his divine esteem as Zion is : “ This is my rest for ever, (saith the Lord ;) here will I dwell.” The seat of his desire, and palace of his presence, is the Church.

Forms may vary, splendid establishments for the propagation of religion may be shaken, but the bush, though frequently surrounded by the flames, has never been consumed. Like the bark in which the Redeemer was once sailing to an opposite shore, the winds have beat against her, the storms have raged around her, but as in the bark, so Christ has been in her, and all has become serene.

The dependence of the church's vitality upon the hourly exercise of Christ's offices as a living Saviour may be thus illustrated. Conceive the wheels of nature to be stopped, the sun to cease to give its light, the earth and the planets to roll their courses, and the great elements of nature to be powerless, and deprived of all their virtue. The visible creation in which man is placed, would first droop and languish ; her exhausted energies would fail her, and she would expire. Life, in all her creative and sustaining power, would give place, and yield up her dominion to the reign of universal death. No less a work of confusion and death would ensue in the church, if a suspension of Christ's offices were to take place. When he ascended up on high, he received the gift of the Spirit, and he is continually pouring it out as the spirit of life, animating and imparting vitality to every part of his church. Not a ray of light can shine into the heart of any member of his body, but what comes

from the great Prophet of his church. Not a sinner can start forth from the grave of spiritual death, without Christ is there to give him light and life. Not a prayer or offering of whatever kind can come up with acceptance before God, without his merits to recommend, and the incense of his intercession to purify and perfume it; while, but for the continual exercise of his kingly office, by virtue of which he holds the keys of death and hell, his church would be the prey of her spiritual enemies, and fall before the powers of darkness and spiritual wickedness in high places. Let all these offices be suspended. Let there be no spirit of life poured out upon the church. Let him close his office as the great teacher. Let there be no Saviour by to give life to the prisoner, bursting his way from the bands of death. Let there be no high priest standing at the right hand of the throne. Let "all power which is in heaven and in earth" fall from his hands, and let there be no Saviour to watch over his people. And what must follow? This church, which is now radiant with light and life, would instantly be in darkness, and gasping in death. The progress of gospel light would be no more; conversion ceases—the Redeemer's car, travelling in the greatness of his strength to the uttermost bounds of the earth, is suddenly arrested in its course. In one word, behold the church extinct, and mankind again falling before the powers of darkness.

When we receive summons from any supreme authority, the officer of the court seeks us not in idling places, he pursues us not into the fields, neither doth he come to our sports to warn us, but to our houses, and there reads his message as if we were there, because we should be there, and then, without any further inquiry departs, fastening the script or writ upon the door. In like manner the ministers of the gospel are God's ambassadors and God's messengers; God supposeth every man to be at home, and so do they, (because, at hours and times set apart for his worship, they are presumed to have no houses but his house,) whom they shall meet nowhere, no more certainly find, than there. There it is that more especially, when "two or three meet together in his name," he will be in the midst of them; there he

will teach them his ways, and there he will give them grace too, to walk in his ways; so true is that of venerable Bede, that *he that comes not willingly to church, shall one day go unwillingly to hell.*—SPENCER.

The church may, in many respects, be compared to the moon. The moon receives her light from the sun, and then she shines forth, and becomes a light unto the world. Yet she shines only in the night. But, though exceeding fair and bright, she has her spots. She also presents to us her various aspects; sometimes she is in the full, and sometimes in the wane; sometimes she shines more gloriously, and sometimes less, and yet still the same moon. She does not always show her light in her full orb; she sometimes so decreaseth, that there seemeth to us not to be any moon; yet she is not then destitute of the sunbeams, though it seems otherwise to our sight. And so the church has all her light from Christ the sun, and then she shines forth in brightness and glory. The sun gives light, but receives none; the moon both gives and receives it: so Christ as God hath his light in himself, but as Mediator he has his light from the Father to communicate it to the church, that the church may give light to the world—"Ye are the light of the world"—to enlighten sinners while the night of this world lasteth. But, though pure and holy, yet the church in herself is not without spots of sin. No saint is without blemishes. (1 John i. 8.) And this should humble the most glittering saints, to consider that they cannot shine so bright in this world, but that their spots may be discernible to themselves and others. And, like the moon, she too is seen under various states and aspects, and subject to many changes. She does not always shine as at full moon, or send forth a full brightness, but is sometimes so obscured that she hardly appears visible; she was forced into the wilderness, from the face of the dragon and Romish beast: yet it is certain the church is always in being. (Rev. xii. 6.) Though her enemies can bring her into a narrow compass, and drive her into holes, yet we may take comfort that, notwithstanding all its various changes and ebbings in

this world, the enemy may as soon change the ordinances of the moon as make an utter end of God's church.

The enemies that exalt themselves against Christ's church shall be "as the smoke out of the chimney;" as Athanasius used to say of Julian the Apostate, that "he was but a little cloud which would be quickly blown away." Smoke, when it breaks out of a furnace with a horrible blackness, threatens to blot out the sun, and to invade and choke up all the air, but a little blast of wind scattereth it, and anon nothing thereof appears. The Lord overthroweth the church's enemies, and protecteth it against the most formidable power, sometimes by ordering and arming natural causes to defend his church, and to amaze the enemy. Thus the stars in their courses are said to fight against Sisera. A mighty wind from heaven, beating on their faces, discomfited them, as Josephus reports. So the christian armies, under Theodosius against Eugenius the tyrant, defeated them by winds from heaven, which snatched away their weapons out of their hands, to make good that promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." So the Lord slew the enemies of Joshua with hail. And thus the Moabites were overthrown by occasion of the sun shining upon the water. Sometimes by implanting fantasies and frightful apprehensions into the minds of the enemy, as into the Midianites and the Assyrians. Thus the Lord caused a voice to be heard in the temple, before the destruction of Jerusalem, warning the faithful to go out of the city. Sometimes by the immediate stroke of God upon their bodies, or their consciences; thus God gave the churches rest by smiting Herod. Thus Maximinius, being smitten with a horrible disease in his bowels, confessed it was Christ which overcame him; and Julian, being smitten with an unknown blow, (from heaven it is supposed,) confessed that Christ was too hard for him; and another Julian, uncle to the Apostate, for polluting the Lord's table, had his bowels rotted till they gushed out. Sometimes destroying them with their own hands. Thus the Lord set every man's sword against his fellow in the huge host of the Midianites. So Pilate and Nero, the

one the murderer of Christ, the other the dedicator of all the consequent great persecutions; both died by their own hands, revenging the cause of Christ and his people upon themselves.

The perfection of glory implies an union of all excellencies in a sovereign degree. The church in the present state is compared to the moon. The moon is opaque in herself, and merely reflects from her surface the light of the sun. She only receives it also in half its globe, while her light is often obscured by the passing clouds. Such is the church which is now only partially illumined, and often darkened for a season; but in the next state it will be filled with light as a ball of crystal penetrated by the sunbeams—all *glorious in holiness, without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.*

In every corn-field there are plants of sickly as well as of luxuriant appearance, supplying a fit emblem of the various characters which compose the true church of Christ. Some indeed are stunted in their growth by various causes; others ripening into the full measure of the stature of Christ, having received a larger measure of the spirit of all grace, and enjoyed a more copious effusion of the beams of the Sun of Righteousness. Yet all these must be permitted to mingle together till the harvest. Each have their separate uses; and as the wise husbandman is content and thankful if the weeds do not overpower the corn, so the wise Christian will be grateful to God that errors both in doctrine and practice are not more abounding than they are, being satisfied that in the final issue and separation of the tares from the corn, there will be nothing to complain of; but, on the contrary, that the purposes of God will work their way through all human hypocrisy and weakness, so as to fulfil the truth of the gracious promise, Mat. iii. 12.—**LIGHT FROM THE WEST.**

The church of believers bears this resemblance to the sea, that though always full, it yet has its periodical tides. Twice every day at least it pays its tribute of prayer and praise at the footstool of its Creator and Sanctifier: and on the Lord's day, and at sacramental seasons especially, its affections flow forth in his courts with the spring-tide offering of devotion;

there paying its vows to the Most High, and offering the sacrifices of righteousness in all the beauties of holiness, with the same fulness of delight, with the same extraordinary flow of holy emotion that the sea approaches the shores, and flows up to its highest point, when the moon and the sun exert their united influence upon its tides.—IBID.

A sacred pavilion is now erected in this vale of tears—a wondrous, glorious, and incomparable temple. Its pillars embrace a world. Its upper story reaches to the stars. Its walls are as invincible as Omnipotence. Though heaven and earth be shaken, yet its foundations shall stand and remain unmoved. The natural eye cannot see this temple. This glorious temple is only visible to the eye of faith. The light falls into this temple from above. There, no longer groping in the dark, we walk in the light of the seven-branched candlestick. It is no longer inquired in this temple, “wherewith shall I come before the Lord?” Here we know of an offering that justifies the ungodly. Here, then, is no longer any occasion for the exclamation, “Let not God speak with us, lest we die.” Here we learn exultingly to cry “Abba, Father,” and to cast our cares like children upon the eternal God, who careth for us. The robe with which every one here is clothed, is a robe of righteousness. The bread that is here broken to us, is the bread of that peace which passeth all understanding. The cup of blessing which we here partake, is a portion which no one taketh from us. The air which is breathed here is the air of paradise. The incense of prayer and intercession kindled here, ascends as a sweet savour to the Lord. The songs which resound here, have for their burdens, “I have obtained mercy!” The preacher’s instructions in this temple are, “Comfort ye, comfort ye my people.”—KRUMMACHER.

Surely when the Lord shall have accomplished his work on Mount Sion, when he shall, by the adversary, as by a fan, have purged away the iniquity of Jacob, and taken away his sin, he will then return in peace and beauty to his people again. Look on the preparation of some large building; in one place, you shall see heaps of lime and mortar, in another, piles of timber, everywhere rude

and indigested materials, and a tumultuary noise of axes and hammers; but at length the artificer sets everything in order, and raiseth up a beautiful structure. Such is the proceeding of the Lord in the afflictions and visitations of his church; though the enemy intend to ruin it, yet God intends only to repair it.

When a statute was made in Queen Elizabeth's reign, that all should come to church upon penalty of being looked upon as in a way of recusancy, and so punishable by law, the papists sent to Rome to know the Pope's pleasure. He returned them this answer: "Bid the Catholics in England give me their hearts, and let the queen take the rest;" and withal a dispensation was granted; so that very many came to church, but it was more for fear than love, more for the saving of their purses, than any thought at all of saving their poor deluded souls; and thus it was that as Christ had his saints in Nero's court, so the devil has his servants in the outward court of his visible church; so that a man must have something more to entitle him to heaven than being within the pale of the church, and giving an outward conformity to the ordinances of Christ. His language is, Let them give me their hearts, let God take all the rest; let them be of the church, but not in the church, a partaker of church privileges, but no true proprietor of the graces and benefits thereby accruing.—SPENCER.

Suppose a stranger, one that never heard of the ebbing and flowing of the sea, should come to some navigable river, as to the Thames' side at high water, and should there observe how much it fell in six or seven hours, would he not conclude, that after that the river would run itself dry in a short time? whereas they that are acquainted with the tides know for certain when the ebb is at the lowest, the tide of a rising water is upon the return. Thus it was with the Church of God; it may seem to be at a dead low water, and in a sinking condition, but even then its lowest estate is an immediate forerunner of its rising again; as, for instance, the most raging and violent of those ten bloody persecutions was that of Diocletian, but

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attended by the mild and peaceable times of Constantius the father.—IBID.

It is said of Mytilene, a magnificent stately city near the borders of Phrygia, that it was rarely builded, but very badly situated; for when the south wind blew, the inhabitants grew sick; when the west wind, they did cough; but when the north wind blew, they were all well. Thus the church militant is rarely builded, but badly situated, as it were, in the unhealthy marshes of Egypt; one while the south wind blows, and it is sick, that is, when heresies spring up with the gospel, as in the first five hundred years after Christ; another time the church labours for life under the strength of some violent disease, as in those ten bloody persecutions next following Christ's ascension. Add hereunto the sad distress that she is in, rent and torn in pieces with sects and schisms, and groaning under the burden of an insupportable toleration thereof; but the church's comfort is, that God, the great Physician, will, in his good time, turn about the wind into another corner, that it may be healed.—IBID.

Christ.

It is said of Johannes Manlius, whensoever he spake of the name of Jesus; his eyes dropped. And another reverend divine, being in a deep muse, after some discourse that passed of Jesus, tears trickled down abundantly from his cheeks before he was aware, because he could not draw his full heart to prize Christ aright. Mr. Fox never denied a beggar that asked in the name of Jesus Christ. And religious Baxter never disregarded any (though different in opinion from him) in whom he could discover anything of Jesus Christ. None but Christ, says John Lambert at the stake. And my Master! says Mr. Herbert, that

divine poet, as often as he heard the name of Jesus mentioned. How then should our hearts rejoice, and our tongues be glad ! and how should we be vexed at the deadness and dulness of our naughty nature, that are no more affected with the name of Jesus, a name above all names ! Such a word ! saith the heathen orator, and so emphatical, that other tongues can hardly find a word to express it. It is like the opening of a casket of precious perfume, filling the soul with its fragrance, and the sweet odour of his name.

Mary, when she went in quest of her Saviour, stopped not at the empty monument, but searches and follows him so far, that she discovered him under the disguise of a gardener ; and then casting herself at his feet, takes possession of him, with this acclamation, *Rabboni !* which is in effect as much as Thomas's congratulation, "*My Lord and my God !*" Thus it is that true knowledge doth not always hunt objects at the view, nor doth it stop at the numerous effects wrought by the Creator ; it is not a shallow or superficial knowledge, that God is, in a general consideration, the cause of all things, a Creator at large, but in a nearer—*My God, my Creator !* It is true that Christ is the Saviour of the world ; so much I know, but this is useless truth to me, if my knowledge reach no further, unless my faith entitle me to him, and, by appropriating his work, be able to call him *My Lord, my God, my Redeemer !*—SPENCER.

In the days of Theodosius, the Arians, through his connivance, were grown very bold, and not only had their meetings in Constantinople, the chief city of the empire, but would dispute their opinions in the public streets, and no man could prevail with the emperor to lay restraints upon them, because he thought it would be a mark of severity and intolerance. At length comes to Constantinople one Amphilothius, bishop of Iconium, (a poor town,) an honest man, but no great politician for the world ; he petitions the emperor to restrain the Arians, but in vain. Next time he comes to the court, finding the emperor and his son Arcadius (whom he had lately created joint

emperor) standing together ; he doth very low obeisance to the father, but none to the son, yet coming up to him in a familiar manner seized his hand, and saith, " God save you, my child ;" the emperor taking this for a great affront, being full of rage, bids them turn the man out of doors. As the officers were dragging him forth, he, turning to the emperor, saith, " Make an account, O emperor, that thus, even thus, is the heavenly Father displeased with those that do not *honour the Son* equally with *the Father*:" which the emperor hearing, calls the bishop back again, asks him forgiveness, presently makes a law against Arianism, forbids their meetings and disputations. Here was a blessed artifice by which the zeal of this emperor was suddenly turned into the right channel, and he was taught, by his tenderness over his own honour, and the honour of his son, to be tender of the honour of God, and his Son Jesus Christ.—IBID.

The difficulties attending an open confession of Christ are the occasion of multitudes making shipwreck of their souls. In many hopeful characters that scripture, " the fear of man bringeth a snare," is sadly verified. Cato and the philosophers of Rome honoured the gods of their country, though unbelievers in the superstitions of their country. Plato was convinced of the unity of God, but durst not own his convictions, but said, " It was a truth, neither easy to find, nor safe to own." And even Seneca, the renowned moralist, was forced by temptation to dissemble his convictions, of whom Augustus saith, " He worshipped what himself reprehended, and did what himself reprov'd." And at the interruption which was given to the progress of the Reformation by the return of the papists to power—some, as they went to mass, would exclaim, " Let us go to the common error." Thus, conviction is not conversion, where there is no confession of Christ.

At Christ's resurrection the Lord sent an angel to remove the stone from the mouth of the sepulchre ; not to supply any want of power in him who could himself have rolled away the stone with one of his fingers ; but as a judge,

when the law is satisfied, sendeth an officer to open the prison doors to him who hath made that satisfaction; so the Father, to testify that his justice was fully satisfied with the price which his Son had paid, sent an officer of heaven to open the doors of the grave, and, as it were, to hold away the hanging, while his Lord came forth of his chamber.

A traveller writes, "I saw a flaming globe of fire, magnificent indeed, but too terrible for the eye to rest upon, if its beams had been naked and exposed; but it was suspended in a vase of crystal so transparent that while it softened the intensity of its rays, it shrouded nothing of its beauty. On the contrary, that which before would have been a mass of undistinguishable light, now emitted through the vase many beautiful and various coloured rays which riveted the beholder with wonder and astonishment." Such is God manifested in Christ. Out of Christ he meets the affrighted sinner's eye as a "consuming fire." Like fiery flames breaking forth to consume the adversary, he is too terrible for the apprehension of man. Before his brightness the seraphim veil their faces with twain of their wings, and astonished man cannot behold him. But now he reveals himself in Christ, and says, "Look unto me." His terrible majesty no longer affrights us—like the fiery beams softened by the vase, his "consuming fire," seen in Christ, is like the mild rays of the morning sun in spring, going forth to bless the earth with its cheerful and invigorating beams. So shines out the light of his glory, creating joy in the heart of man and angels—the one seeing him as the reconciling Father of his long-lost family, the other beholding fresh perfections and glories beaming from his godhead as they see him in Christ the Redeemer.

Believers see whence their preservation proceeds. They see the Captain of their salvation, in whom is the fulness of the Spirit, and to whom are committed all the stores of grace, supplying them daily and hourly as the matter requires. As the captain in an army does not at once give out to his soldiers the whole provision that is needful for their way and undertaking, which if he should, most of them would soon imprudently waste it, and so quickly perish

with want ; but he keeps provisions for them all in his stores, and distributes to them according to their daily necessities ; even thus deals this great leader with the sons of God. He keeps the stores of grace and spiritual strength in his own hand, and from thence imparts unto them according to their need.

Many are the similitudes used by both ancient and modern writers to illustrate the mysterious union of God and man in one person of Jesus Christ our Mediator ; but these have long since been noted as defective in one part or other ; that, therefore, of the misletoe in the oak, or in the apple-tree, seemeth to hold out the best. First, the apple-tree and misletoe are two perfect and different natures in one tree, the misletoe wanting no integral part that belongs to misletoe : so the godhead and manhood are two perfect and different natures in one person, in one Christ, in one Lord. Secondly, the misletoe never had a separate and distinct subsistence of its own, but one subsisteth in union with the apple-tree, which sustaineth and maintaineth it ; so the human nature of Christ never had any distinct and separate subsistence of its own, but, from the first conception, subsisted in union with the divine substance. Thirdly, the apple-tree and misletoe are so one tree, that their two different natures are neither confounded together, nor changed one into another to make up a third nature, but are so individually united, that, retaining their different natures, they are but one tree ; so also the two natures of Christ are without confusion or commutation united in one person, and yet they still retain real differences. Fourthly, the apple-tree and misletoe, though one tree, yet, having different natures, bear different fruits, as apples and berries ; so the godhead and manhood of Christ, though but one person, yet being different natures, perform distinct actions peculiar to each of them. Lastly, as we may truly say, by reason of this union, this apple-tree is a misletoe, and this misletoe is an apple-tree ; and consequently this misletoe beareth apples, and this apple-tree beareth berries ; so we may truly say, by reason of the personal union in God and man in Christ, this son of man is the Son of God, and the Son of God is the

son of Mary ; the Son of God was crucified, and the son of Mary created heaven and earth.—SPENCER.

We are not to think there was no light in the world till Christ came, and the gospel was published in the world by the apostles' ministry. Our Lord, indeed, speaking with reference to his ministry, says that "light is come into the world." But Abraham saw Christ's day.—John viii. 56. And all the faithful before Christ saw the promises, that is, their accomplishment in Christ, afar off.—Heb. xi. 13. For it was with Christ the Sun of Righteousness as it is with the natural sun, which illuminates the hemisphere before it actually rises, or showeth its body above the horizon ; but when it rises and shows itself, the light is much clearer : so it was when there was a more clear and open manifestation of Christ by the gospel.—IBID.

The justice of God receives more glory in the redemption of our souls than in the condemnation of the world. For Christ at *once* made full satisfaction, but all the condemned souls in hell are *ever* satisfying. You know a payment may be made of equal value in a small weight of gold, which is equivalent to a greater weight of silver. Christ's blood and sufferings, although they were short in respect of their time and duration, yet they did exceed the eternal torments of the condemned in respect of the worth of his person.

Though God maketh reconciliation with us, yet this grace of his is to us in vain, because we continue his enemies still. The sun is set in the heavens for a public light, yet it benefiteth none but those who open their eyes to admit and make use of its light. A court of justice or equity is a public sanctuary ; yet it relieveth none but those that seek unto it. Christ is a public and universal salvation, set up for all comers, and applicable to all particulars. "He is not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance ;"—"He tasted death for every man ;" but all this is not beneficial unto life, but only to those that receive him.

After the prophets of ancient times had long gazed through the mists of futurity at the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow, a company of them were gathered together on the summit of Calvary. They saw a

host of enemies ascending the hill, arrayed for battle, and most terrific in their aspect. In the middle of the line was the Law of God, fiery and exceedingly broad, and working wrath; on the right wing was Beelzebub with his troop of infernals; and on the left Caiaphas with his Jewish priests, and Pilate with his Roman soldiers. The rear was brought up by Death, the last enemy. When the holy seers had escaped this army, and perceived that it was drawing nigh, they started back and prepared for flight. As they looked round, they saw the Son of God advancing with intrepid step, having his face fixed upon the hostile band. Seest thou the danger that is before thee? said one of the men of God. "I will tread them in my anger," he replied, "and trample them in my fury." "Who art thou?" said the prophet. He answered, "I that speak in righteousness, mighty to save." "Wilt thou venture to the battle alone?" asked the seer. The Son of God replied, "I looked and there was none to help, and I wondered there was none to uphold; therefore, my own arm shall bring salvation unto me, and my fury shall uphold me." "At what point will they commence their attack?" inquired the anxious prophet. "I will just meet the law," he replied, "and pass under the curse; for, 'lo! I come to do thy will, O God;' when I have succeeded in the centre of the line, the colours will turn in my favour." So saying, he moved forward. Instantly the thunderings of Sinai were heard, and the whole band of prophets quaked with terror. But he advanced undaunted, amid the gleaming lightnings. For a moment he was concealed from view; and the banner of wrath waved alone in apparent triumph. Suddenly the scene was changed. A stream of blood poured forth from his wounded side, and put out all the fires of Sinai. The flag of peace was now seen unfurled, and consternation filled the ranks of his foes. He then crushed with his bruised heel the old serpent's head and put all the infernal powers to flight. With his iron rod he dashed to pieces the enemies on the left wing like a potter's vessel. Death still remained, who thought himself invincible, having hitherto triumphed over all. He came forward brandishing his sting, which he had

whetted on Sinai's tables of stone. He darted it at the conqueror, but it turned down, and hung like the flexible lash of a whip. Dismayed, he retreated to the grave, unto which the conqueror pursued. In a dark corner of his den he sat on his throne of mouldering skulls, and called upon the worms, his hitherto faithful allies, to aid him in the conflict; but they replied, "His flesh shall see no corruption." The sceptre fell from his hands. The conqueror seized him, bound him, and condemned him to the lake of fire; and then rose from the grave followed by a band of released captives, who came forth after his resurrection to be witnesses of the victory he had won.—CHRISTMAS EVANS.

There is an apologue, how the dove made moan to her fellow birds of the tyranny of the hawk; one counsels her to keep below; but the hawk can stoop for his prey: another adviseth her to soar aloft; but the hawk can mount as high as she. Another to shroud herself in the woods, there she shall be sure; but alas, that is the hawk's place where he keeps his court. Another bids her keep the town, there she was sure to be safe from the hawk; but so she became a prey to man, and had her eyes put out to make the hawk sport. At last one bids her rest herself in the holes of the rock; there she should be safe, violence itself could not surprise her. This dove is the soul of every man, she would gladly be *secured* from Satan. Come to me, saith riches, here thou shalt be secure; no, wealth is the devil's stirrup, whereby he gets up and rides the covetous man. Come to me, saith pleasure, here thou shalt be safe; as if she were not as very a Delilah to betray thee to the Philistines. Honour says, Come to me, here thou art safe; as if the devil durst not come near the court-gates, or greatness were a license to sin, or a protection against the arrest of judgments; no, there is no assurance in any of these; yet there is a rock of safety, clefts in that rock, the wounds of Jesus Christ; there, and there only, the soul shall be in safety.—SPENCER.

The vine of Eschol, one of whose clusters was a burden for two men, affords the most apt emblem of Him who condescends to say of himself, "I am the true Vine." His

human nature resembled the plain, rough, and almost unsightly external appearance of the vine-stem ; but in his divine nature he was higher than the heavens, and extended the influence of his refreshing shade over the heavens and the earth.

Christ, a fountain of living waters, self-existent and eternal ; he is not like the stream which, however deep, and full, and broad, is derived from some other source, but is himself the source of all things, from whom all the streams have taken their origin. It takes many springs to form one stream, and many streams to fill the channel of a river ; nor is the spring unfrequently strangely disproportioned to the river. The traveller is astonished when he arrives at the fountain head to be able to step across it, and the nearer he views the stream to its source the shallower is its water ; but the nearer I approach to my Saviour, the more I am astonished at him as the fountain, and am lost in wonder at the immensity and glory of the works that emanate from him.

That the innocent should suffer for the guilty is unjust, and that which is so cannot satisfy justice. I answer, 'tis unjust if the innocent suffer compulsively, but not if he suffer freely : 'tis unjust if the innocent sink under his sufferings, but not if he be able to bear them : 'tis unjust if there be no good in his sufferings commensurate to the evil, but not if the evil be exceeded by the subsequent good : 'tis unjust if the innocent stand in no relation to the innocent for whom he suffers ; but not if he stand in relation to him. Suppose a natural relation ; Saul's sons were hanged for Saul's sins. 2 Sam. xxi. 9. Suppose a political relation ; seventy thousand fall for David's sin ; 2 Sam. xxiv. 15 ; which makes him cry out, Lo ! I have sinned, but these sheep, what have they done ? Suppose a voluntary relation ; sureties must pay for their principals, and that not only in money matters, but in capital punishments ; thus the ἀντιπροσώπων engaged life for life, which the apostle seems to insinuate in that passage, "Peradventure for a good man some would dare to die." Rom. v. 7. And why may not Christ, who by all these ways is conjoined to us, naturally as a man,

legally as a surety, and mystically as a head, justly suffer for us? Especially, seeing there was free action in his passion, victorious strength under his burthen, and the penal evil crowned by such a grand good as redemption is, why may not he suffer for us? The Scriptures are positive in it, "Christ died for the ungodly;" Rom. v. 6; "the just for the unjust;" 1 Pet. iii. 18; and "one for all." 2 Cor. v. 14.

Andromeda, a daughter of Cepheus, the king of Æthiopia, to appease the resentment of Neptune, was chained naked to a rock, and exposed to a sea monster. Perseus engaged to deliver her, on condition of receiving her in marriage, as the reward of his trouble. Just as the monster was about to devour her, Perseus slew him and delivered Andromeda. Mount Sinai, or the hope of being saved (in part at least) by our own works, may be compared to that dreary rock; the soul of man is the Andromeda chained to the rock; Satan is the serpent that gapes to devour; Christ is the Perseus, who, by the sword of his Spirit, allays the monster's power, breaks the legal chain, sets the awakened soul at liberty, and takes it to himself as a bride, and an eternal monument of his victory over the monster Satan.

I have no notion of a timid, disingenuous profession of Christ. Such preachers and professors are like a rat playing at hide-and-seek behind a wainscot, who puts his head through a hole to see if the coast is clear, and ventures out if nobody is in the way; but slinks back again when danger appears. We cannot be honest to Christ except we are bold for him. He is either worth *all* we can lose for him, or he is worth *nothing*.

A celebrated heathen said, *Meâ virtute me involvo*: "I wrap myself up in my own virtue." A true believer has something better to wrap himself up in. When Satan says, *thou hast yielded to my suggestions*: when conscience says, *thou hast turned a deaf ear to my admonitions*; when the law of God says, *thou hast broken me*; when the gospel says, *thou hast neglected me*; when justice says, *thou hast insulted me*; when mercy says, *thou hast slighted me*; faith can say, all this is too true; but *Christi justitiâ involvo, I wrap myself up in the righteousness of Jesus Christ.*—SPENCER.

The business of Christ's blood is, to wash our bad works out, and to wash our good works clean.

A gracious sight of our vileness (says one of the ablest, and most useful writers of the last century) is the work of Christ only, by his Spirit. The law is indeed a looking-glass, able to represent the filthiness of a person; but the law gives not eyes to see that filthiness. Bring a looking-glass and set it before a blind man—he sees no more spots in his face than if he had none at all. Though the glass be a good glass, still the glass cannot give eyes; yet if he had eyes, he would, in the glass, see his blemishes. The apostle James compares the law to a looking-glass; and a faculty to represent is all the law possesseth. But it doth not impart a faculty to see what it represents. It is Christ alone who opens the eyes of men, to behold their own vileness and guilt. He opens the eyes, and then, in the law, a man sees what he is.

Nature doth afford us one comparison fit to explain or illustrate the manner of this mysterious union, the God-man; which is the union of man's soul and body, by which he becomes *one* person. The soul and body are two substances, very different in kind, properties, and dignity, (the one material, extended, divisible, corruptible, passive, lifeless, and senseless; the other immaterial, indivisible, incorruptible, self-moving, endued with life, knowledge, passion,) capable also both of separate existence and subsistence by itself; yet are these (though in a manner difficult for us to imagine or comprehend) united together and concur to the constitution of a man, (and that so as to remain still in substance distinct, retaining each its natural properties, without any confusion or conversion of one into the other; so also that a man is truly from them denominated both corporeal and spiritual, mortal and immortal;) in like manner (though more admirably and incomprehensibly) are the divine and humane nature united in the Son of God; for (as we read in Athanasius' creed)—“As the reasonable soul and flesh is one man, so God and man is one Christ.”

Christ's being a mediator of reconciliation, implies *the ardent love, and large piety that filled his heart towards poor*

*sinner*s. For he doth not only mediate by way of entreaty, going betwixt both, and persuading and begging peace ; but he mediates in the capacity of a surety, by putting himself under an obligation to satisfy our debts. O how compassionately did Christ's heart work toward us ! Our Mediator, like Jonah his type, seeing the stormy sea of God's wrath working tempestuously, and ready to swallow us up, cast in himself to appease the storm. I remember how much that noble act of Marcus Curtius is celebrated in the Roman history, who being informed by the oracle that the great breach made by the earthquake could not be closed except something of worth were cast into it, heated with love to the commonwealth, he went and cast in himself. This was looked upon as a bold and brave adventure. But what was this to Christ's offering ?

It is reported of a certain godly man, that living near to a philosopher, he did often persuade him to become a Christian. Oh ! but, said the philosopher, if I turn Christian, I must, or may, lose all for Christ ; to whom and to which the good man replied, If you lose anything for Christ, he will be sure to repay it a hundredfold. But, said the philosopher, Will you be bound for Christ ; that if he do not pay me, you will. Yes, that I will, said the other. So the philosopher became a Christian, and the good man entered into bond for performance of covenants. Some time after it so fell out that the philosopher fell sick on his deathbed, and holding the bond in his hand, sent for the party engaged, to whom he gave up the bond, and said, Christ hath paid all, there is nothing for you to pay ; take your bond and cancel it. Thus it is that Christ is a sure, willing, able paymaster ; whatsoever any man ever did for him, hath been fully recompensed ; and put the case so far that a man should be loser for Christ, yet he shall be no loser by Christ,—he will make amends for all in the conclusion.—SPENCER.

Do you ask me, where be my jewels ? My jewels are my husband and his triumphs, said Phocion's wife. Do you ask me, where be your ornaments ? My ornaments are my two sons, brought up in virtue and learning, said the mother of the Gracchi. Do you ask me where are my treasures ? My

treasures are my friends, said Constantius, the father of Constantine; but ask a child of God, where be his jewels, his treasures, his ornaments, his comforts, his delights, and the joy of his soul, he will answer, with that martyr, None but Christ, none but Christ—Christ is all in all unto me.—IBID.

A stationer, being at a fair, hung out his pictures of men famous in their kind; among which he had also the picture of Christ: divers men bought according to their several fancies; the soldier buys his Cæsar, the lawyer his Justinian, the physician his Galen, the philosopher his Aristotle, the poet his Virgil, the orator his Cicero, and the divine his Augustine,—every man after the dictation of his own heart: the picture of Christ hung by still, of less price than the rest; a poor shopman, that had no more money than would purchase that, bought it, saying, Now every one hath taken away his god, let me have mine. Thus, whilst the covetous repair to their riches like birds to their nests; the ambitious to their honours, like butterflies to a poppy; the strong to their holds; the learned to their arts; atheists to their sensual refuges, as dogs to their kennels; and politicians to their wit, as foxes to their holes; the devout soul will have no other sanctuary, fix upon no other object, but Christ Jesus, not pictured in their chamber, but planted in the inner chamber of the heart.—IBID.

It is the observation of Sir Walter Raleigh, that if all the pictures and patterns of a merciless prince were lost in this world, they might all again be painted to the life out of the story of King Henry the Eighth. But, on the other side, the Jews had such a high esteem of Esdras, that if mercy, love, and knowledge had put out their candle, they might light it again at his brain. Behold yet a greater than Esdras, Christ Jesus himself: if all our love were extinguished, at his love we might easily rekindle it: not a word that he spoke, not a work that he did, not a passion that he suffered, but was an argument, a character of his love; he brought love, he bought love, he exercised love, he bequeathed love, he died in love, he is all love.—IBID.

We read in our chronicles, that Edmund surnamed Ironside and Canute, the first Danish king, after many encounters, and equal fights, at length embraced a present agreement, which was made by parting England betwixt them two, and confirmed by oath and sacrament, putting on each other's apparel and arms, as a ceremony, to express the atonement of their minds, as if they had made transactions of their persons to each other; Canute became Edmund, and Edmund became Canute. Even such a change of apparel is betwixt Christ and his church—Christ and every true repentant sinner; he taketh upon him their sins, and putteth upon them his righteousness; he changeth their rags into robes; he arrays them with the righteousness of the saints; that twofold righteousness, imputed and imparted; that of justification, and the other of sanctification; that is an undercoat, this is an upper; that clean and fair, this white and fair; and both from himself, who is made unto them not only “wisdom, but righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.” Yet, further, he puts upon his church his own comeliness, decks his spouse with his own jewels, as Isaac did Rebecca; clothes her with needle-work, and makes her more glorious than Hester ever was, in all her beauty and bravery; rejoiceth over her as the bridegroom over his bride; yea, is ravished in his love to her, with one of her eyes lifted up to him in prayer and meditation, with one chain of her neck, that very chain of his own graces in her.—IBID.

When Solomon was made king, “they did eat and drink with great gladness before the Lord;” and at the solemn inaugurations of such kings and princes, the trumpets sound, the people shout, the conduits run wine, honours are dispersed, gifts distributed, prisons opened, offenders pardoned, acts of grace published, nothing suffered to eclipse the beauty of such a festivity. Thus it was at the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh; wise men of the East brought presents unto him, rejoicing with exceeding great joy, Matt. ii. 10, 11; John the Baptist leapeth in the womb; Mary rejoiceth in God her Saviour; Zacha-

rias glorifieth God for the horn of his salvation in the house of David; Simeon and Hannah bless the Lord for the glory of Israel; and after, when he came to Jerusalem, the whole multitude spread garments, strewed branches, and cried before him and behind him, Hosanna to the Son of David, hosanna to the highest. Matt. xxi. 9. The glory of the Lord shines that day, and a heavenly host proclaim their joy, Luke ii. 9; and the Psalmist, prophesying long before of it, said, This is the day which the Lord has made, we will rejoice and be glad in it. Psalm cxviii. 24.—IBID.

All the good things that can be reckoned up here below, have only a finite and limited benignity; some can clothe, but cannot feed; others can nourish, but they cannot heal; others can enrich, but they cannot secure; others adorn, but cannot advance; all do serve, but none do satisfy; they are like a beggar's coat, made of many pieces, not all enough either to beautify or defend; but Christ is full sufficient for all his people; he ascended on high that he might fill all things, Ephes. iv. 10, that he might pour forth such abundance of his Spirit in his church, as might answer all the conditions whereunto they may be reduced; righteousness to cover all their sins; plenty enough to supply all their wants; grace enough to subdue all their lusts; wisdom enough to resolve all their doubts; power enough to vanquish all their enemies; virtue enough to cure all their diseases; fulness enough to save them, and that to the utmost. So that as one ocean hath more waters than all the rivers of the world, and one sun more light than all the luminaries in the heavens; so one Christ is more all to a poor soul, than if it had the all of the whole world a thousand times over.—IBID.

It is mentioned, that in the time of our Marian persecution there was a woman, who being convened before Bonner upon the trial of her religion, he threatened that he would take away her husband from her: saith she, Christ is my husband. I will take away thy child. Christ, saith she, is better to me than ten sons. I will strip thee, saith he, of all thy outward comforts. Yea, but Christ is

mine, saith she, and you cannot strip me of him. The thoughts of this bore up the woman's heart; spoil her of all, and take away all, yet Christ was hers, and him they could not take away. Thus when the soul lives, assurance of God's love, and of its calling to grace and glory, cannot but make a man very patient to endure with cheerfulness whatsoever of opposition he may meet with here below. There is a remarkable phrase of the prophet, "the inhabitants of Sion shall not say, I am sick, the people that dwell therein shall be forgiven their iniquity:" a strange passage! he doth not say, they were not sick, but the text saith, they should not say so; and what is the reason? why should the people forget their sorrows, and not remember their pains? this was it that did it, the Lord had forgiven them their iniquities. The sense of pardon does away the sense of pain.—IBID.

In *historical* paintings, the principal personages whose history is to be represented occupy the fore-ground, and stand out, as it were, from the other figures which occupy the back-ground. In the painting of the death of General Wolfe, who fell at Quebec, the dying hero immediately arrests your attention; your eyes fasten upon him, and all your sympathies and feelings are united there. So with the believer, it is Christ who occupies the fore-ground of his vision. *He* is the glorious personage who continually fills his eye and secures his attention, and makes every surrounding object little in its dimensions beside him. It is Christ who died for him at Calvary; this draws out his affections towards him. All other objects are eclipsed in their beauty, and have no beauty in comparison with Christ. "Whom have I in heaven," &c. But with the man of this world, the things of time and sense are the grand and capital figures which occupy the fore-ground, whilst Christ is in the back-ground, and scarcely visible. Yea, so many are these, that the image of Christ is generally lost in the crowd. These are perpetually filling his eyes, and calling forth his admiration, while Jesus is (as of old) like a Nazarene, and despised.

Augustine in his Confess. lib. viii. cap. 2, hath a nota-

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ble story of one Victorinus, (famous in Rome for rhetoric, which he taught the senators ;) this man in his old age was converted to Christianity, and came to Simplicius, (one eminent at the time for his piety,) whispering in his ear softly these words : “ Ego sum christianus,—I am a Christian ;” but this holy man answered, “ Non credo ; nec reputabo te inter christianos, nisi in ecclesia te videro,—I will not believe it, nor count thee so, till I see thee among the Christians in the church :” at which he laughed, saying, “ Ergones parites facient christianum ?—Cannot I be such, unless I openly profess it, and let the world know the same ?” This he said for fear, being yet a young convert, though an old man ; but a while after (when he was more confirmed in the faith, and seriously considered that if he continued thus ashamed of Christ, he would be ashamed of him when he cometh in the glory of his Father with his holy angels) he changed his note, and came to Simplicius, saying, “ Eamus ecclesiam, christianus volo fieri,—Let us go to the church, I will now in earnest be a Christian ; and there, though a private profession of his faith might have been accepted, chose to do it openly, saying, “ that he had openly professed rhetoric, which was not a matter of salvation, and should he be afraid to own the word of God in the congregation of the faithful ? God requires the religion both of the heart and mouth. Rom. x. 10.

What prepossession, what blindness must it be, to compare the son of Sophroniscus to the son of Mary ! What an infinite disproportion is there between them ! Socrates, dying without pain or ignominy, easily supported his character to the last, and if his death, however easy, had not crowned his life, it might have been doubted whether Socrates, with all his wisdom, was any more than a vain sophist. He invented, it is said, the theory of morals ; others, however, before had put them in practice ; he had only to say, therefore, what they had done, and to reduce their example to precepts. Aristides had been just before Socrates defined justice ; Leonidas had given up his life for his country before Socrates had declared patriotism to be a duty ; the Spartans were a sober people before Socrates recommended

sobriety ; before he had defined virtue, Greece abounded in virtuous men. But where could Jesus learn, among his competitors, that pure and sublime morality of which he only hath given us both precept and example ? The greatest wisdom was made known amongst the most bigoted fanaticism ; and the simplicity of the most heroic virtue did honour to the vilest people upon earth. The death of Socrates peaceably philosophising with his friends appears the most agreeable that could be wished for ; that of Jesus expiring in the midst of agonising pain, abused, insulted, and accused by a whole nation, is the most horrible that can be feared. Socrates, in receiving the cup of poison, blessed indeed the weeping executioner who administered. But Jesus, in the midst of his excruciating tortures, prayed for his merciless tormentors. Yes, if the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus were those of a God.

Just as when a fainting fit has come upon the body, a strong and pungent odour will revive it, so will the fragrance of Jesus' name refresh the dying soul, when nothing else under heaven will refresh and resuscitate its languid powers.

The love of Christ is not lost by generalities, nor is it lessened by division. Like the great luminary of heaven, in the communications of his grace he shines with the same fulness upon all the objects of his love ; each alike observes the complete disk of the Sun of Righteousness turned towards himself, as though no creatures besides participated in his beams.

When a man is born into the world, he is born in sin, and his name entered in a book in which the names of all the family of fallen Adam are enrolled, and by its side stands the recording angel, who enters against the sinner's name, from the hour that conscience strikes the clock in his heart, every sin that he commits, both of thought, word, and deed. But when the sinner hears the voice of God calling him to turn, and reads his sins in the book of his law, and the sinner cries, I perish (for I deserve nothing but wrath) unless the Redeemer atone for my sins—immediately the hand of him who was crucified on Calvary is seen covering the handwriting of transgression

that was recorded against the sinner's name, and the blood flows afresh from its wounded pores, and blots and covers this testimony to sin; and when God looks, he sees *now* not the sinner's sin, but the blood of the Redeemer, with whom he is well pleased.

The Holy Ghost is always sure to bring a man to the foot of the cross. It is a beam of light, which if you follow it will surely lead you to the sun. It is a stream, and by following the stream you will surely be led to the fountain, or to the ocean. So when a man begins to sow to the spirit, you will be sure to find him at the foot of the cross. He wants pardon, he wants grace and safety. There it is.

As the lesser streams fall into, and are mixed with the greater, and as all the rivers empty themselves and are lost in the ocean; so the whole course of events from the creation of the world, in their separate currents, and in their general and combined tide, flow towards one grand era, styled in Scripture "the fulness of time;" and terminate in one event of infinitely greater moment than all the rest—the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh.

Some compare the way in which Christ's righteousness is imputed to us to the sun shining upon the wall through painted glass, whereby the true colour communicated by the glass is upon it; yet this colour is not the colour of the wall, but the colour of the glass, and inherent in the glass, and only reflected on the wall; the righteousness whereby we are justified, and which covers our iniquities from the sight of God, is inherent in Christ, but reflected or transferred on us.

Christ's death was profitable to remission of sins before, at the time, and after it took place, as the sun at noon-day not only illuminates the meridian where he is, but also the east backwards whence he came, and the west forwards whither he is rolling his course. Hence Jesus Christ is called "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

"I beheld, and lo! in the midst of the throne stood a lamb as it were slain." This verse of the subject has been well illustrated by the story of Amyntas and Æschylus, related by the historian Ælian. Æschylus was condemned to death by the Athenians, and was about to be led to execution; his

brother Amyntas had signalised himself in the service of his country, and in a day of most illustrious victory, in a great measure obtained by his means, had lost his hand. He came into the court just as his brother was condemned, and, without saying anything, exposed the stump of his arm from under his garment, and held it up in their sight. The historian tells us, that when "the judges saw this mark of his suffering, they remembered what *he* had done, and for his sake discharged the guilty brother whose life had been forfeited. Thus, the wounded body of the Saviour is in the sight of God thus perpetually pleading for *his* sinful and guilty brethren.—BICKERSTETH.

As the house of Obededom was blessed for the sake of the residing ark, so religion has often escaped evil, and received homage from its foes, for the sake of the character of Christ. Men who have destroyed, in intention, every other part of the temple of truth, have paused when they came to this, having turned aside and desisted for a while from the work of demolition, to gaze and bow before it; have not merely left it as a column too majestic, or an altar too holy, for human sacrilege to assault, but (it was the only redeeming act in their history) have even subscribed their names on its base, and have been heard to burst forth in admiring exclamations approaching to love.

Christ is "God manifest." He is the word—God heard :—He is the light—God seen :—He is the life—God felt.

If sympathy is to be considered as a kind of substitution by which we are put into the place of another, and affected in many respects as he is affected, then what shall we think of the sympathy of Christ, which never allows him to remain an indifferent spectator of anything his people may suffer? Virtue cannot receive the slightest wound of which he does not instantly feel the smart. He is the great sympathetic nerve of the church, over which all the oppressions and sufferings of his people distinctly pass; nor does that mysterious instrument of sensation in the human body convey more correctly to the sensorium a sense of the condition of the extremest part of the frame, than the benevolence of Jesus, who is the sensorium of the spiritual universe, appre-

hends and sympathises with the least emotion of suffering in his body the church.—HARRIS.

I would illustrate that unvarying attention with which the believer would regard the Saviour, by a very humble comparison. We may gather wisdom from the evolutions of performers on the slack rope. He has to preserve his balance in a most critical position ; at the first glance it seems inevitable that he will sustain a fall. But as your attention is directed to him, you will observe that his eye is steadily fixed on one spot above him. He maintains one determined and unalterable gaze, an immoveable vision, from first to last. If he looked below him, or on the surrounding objects, he would fall. His safety lies in the steady observance of the object above him. It is so with the believer. His safety alone consists in "looking to Jesus," to him with whom he first found safety, and through whom it must be preserved. If he violate this law of faith, he will inevitably fall into sin. He stands in the midst of perils. If the various objects by which he is surrounded draw off his attention from the Saviour, he falls from his steadfastness. Not only is he apt to forget the need of looking off from the things of time and sense, and resolutely fixing his eye on the rock that is higher than he, but his position is that of one who has enemies that wait for his halting, and seek to pull him down. Would he be safe, his secret consists in *unceasingly* "looking unto Jesus."

How do men stamp their own sordid works with the peculiar dignity and value of Christ's blood, and therein seek to enter at the gate which God hath shut to all the world, because Jesus Christ the prince entered in thereby?—Ezek. xliv. 2, 3. He entered into heaven in a direct, immediate way, even in his own name, and for his own sake; this gate, saith the Lord, shall be shut to all others; let them fear, lest, while they seek entrance into heaven at the wrong door, they do not for ever shut against themselves the true and only door of happiness.

The divine wisdom and goodness was pleased, before, and during the legal dispensation, by various predictions and types, to delineate the person of our Redeemer, and the

work of redemption, to prepare the minds of men for his reception at his coming into the world. All the evangelical prophecies recorded in the Old Testament, as dispersed rays, are conspicuously united in him, *the Sun of Righteousness*; and, as in a curious piece of mosaic work, each stone, according to its natural vein and colour, is so exactly disposed, and with that proportion joined to another, that the lively figure of the human body results from the composure; so, by variety of types, the entire image of our Saviour's life is represented from his first appearing on earth to his ascending to heaven.

He who looks upon Christ through his *own* graces, is like one that sees the sun in water, which wavers and moves as the water doth. Look upon Christ only as shining in the firmament of the Father's grace and love, and there you will see him in his own genuine glory and unspeakable fulness.

A true friend divides the cares, and doubles the joys, of his brother in affection. Christ does more; for he takes the cares of his people entirely on himself; and not only doubles their joys, but makes all his joys their own.

Suppose a king's son should get out of a besieged city, and leave his wife and children behind, whom he loves as his own soul; would this prince, when arrived at his father's palace, delight himself with the splendour of the court, and forget his family in distress? No! but having their cries and groans always in his ears, he would come post to his father, and entreat him, as ever he loved him, that he would send all the force of his kingdom to raise the siege, and save his dear relatives from perishing. Nor will Christ, though gone up from the world, and ascended into his glory, forget his children for a moment that are left behind him.

It is a peculiar kind of expression, where the apostle prays that they might "know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge." We may know that *experimentally* which we cannot know *comprehensively*; we may know that in its power and effects which we cannot know in its nature and depths. A weary person may receive refreshment from a spring, who cannot fathom the depth of the bottom from whence it proceeds.

As the payment of a great sum all at once, and at a day is a better payment than by a penny a month, until a thousand years be out ; so Christ's satisfying the Father at once, by one sacrifice of himself, is a better satisfaction than if we should have been infinite days in paying that which his justice requires, and his indignation to sin doth expect.

The *love of Christ* could not allow him to despise the feeblest puttings forth of grace. Let me ask my mother who bears me—thou seest thy feeble child in all its feebleness, thou seest him weak and sickly, with but little power, vigour, strength, healthiness—dost thou despise him because he is all this? dost thou make that one an exception? I say, love all others but that one—dost thou say so? I appeal to thine heart—I would make my appeal to the understanding the groundwork of my appeal; but on that ground I will appeal to thine heart; and I do it because God does it, for “as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth those that fear him.” And shall the tender compassionate Redeemer not look on one for whom he died, to give him an everlasting inheritance, and make him a partaker of his Spirit, when his blood is sprinkled upon the door-posts and lintel of the heart? What! will he say to him, “Because thou art so feeble, I despise thee; because thou art so weak, I reject thee?” Never. It is not in the heart of Christ to do it—not only is it not in his covenant engagement to do it, but it is not in his heart. O that thou wouldst never so think of him, poor, weak, and tempted believer, any more for ever! O that thou wouldst never, *never entertain one hard thought of him more!* O that thou wouldst never take occasion, from the feebleness of thy grace, to reason against the strength of his love!

The wise architect of that building, the spiritual temple, knew both what it would cost, and what a foundation was needful, to bear so great and so lasting a structure as he intended. Sin having defaced and demolished the first building of man in the integrity of his creation, it was God's design, out of the very ruins of fallen man, to raise a more lasting edifice than the former, one that should not be subject to decay; and therefore he fitted for it a foundation that might be everlasting. He chose his own Son, made

flesh. He was *God*, that he might be a strong foundation ; he was *man*, that he might be suitable to the nature of the stone whereof the building was to consist, that they might join and cement together.

Think how a penitent Israelite must have regarded his High Priest. We may consider such a man as saying, " I am a miserable polluted sinner ; I cannot enter the holy place where God dwells, but am kept at a distance. I cannot burn incense acceptably, cannot be permitted to approach him on my behalf. He carries my name, or the name of my tribe, on his breast-plate. He offers sacrifice *for me* ; he burns incense *for me* ; he enters the most holy place, and sprinkles atoning blood for me. In him I am accepted ; and in him will I glory. Take away my High Priest, and you take away my all ; but while I have him, while he is accepted in my behalf, I will exult and rejoice. And with how much more reason may the Christian triumph and glory in his great High Priest, and rejoice that he is " accepted in the Beloved !"

Suppose professors of religion to be ranged in different concentric circles around Christ as their common centre. Some value the presence of their Saviour so highly, that they cannot bear to be at any remove from him. Even their work they will bring up, and do it in the light of his countenance ; and, while engaged in it, will be seen constantly raising their eyes to Him, as if fearful of losing one beam of his light. Others, who, to be sure, would not be content to live out of his presence, are yet less wholly absorbed by it than these ; and may be seen a little further off, engaged here and there in their various callings, their eyes generally upon their work, but often looking up for the light which they love. A third class beyond these, but yet within the life-giving rays, includes a doubtful multitude, many of whom are so much engaged in their worldly schemes, that they may be seen standing sideways to Christ, leaning mostly the other way, and only now and then turning their faces towards the light. And yet farther out, among the last scattered rays, so distant that it is often doubtful whether they come at all within their influence, is a mixed

assemblage of busy ones, some with their backs wholly turned upon the sun, and most of them so careful and troubled about their many things, as to spare but little time for their Saviour.

The reason why the men of the world think so little of Christ, is, they do not look at him. Their backs being turned to the sun, they can see only their own shadows, and are therefore only taken up with themselves; while the true disciple, looking only upward, sees nothing but his Saviour, and learns to forget himself.—SPENCER.

Suppose the rebellious subjects of a very wise and good king condemned to death. The king has a son, who, from compassion to these poor wretches, offers to make satisfaction to his father for their crimes, if he will pardon them. The king consents on one condition. He places his son at the door of his palace, and makes proclamation that every one who comes to him for pardon, and is led by his son, shall be forgiven for his sake. One of the culprits comes, and, rejecting the proffered hand of the prince, rushes to the throne himself. Can this man expect mercy? Thus God has provided a Mediator, and commanded all to approach in his name; and none can expect to be received who do not come to God in this appointed way.

It may truly be said, that if ancient Troy was safe from the hosts of Greece, so long as the sacred image of Minerva remained in her lofty shrine—so while the image of Christ remaineth in a soul, it is to that soul for a **PALLADIUM**, which being preserved from all the corruptions which riot in hot confusion within, and all the foreign powers of Satan which can be embattled without its walls, no enemy shall be able to overthrow, or to lay its glory in the dust.

The man who first constructed a ship, and launched forth the vessel from the shore upon the ocean, must have had faith in those principles which have now become so certain that we overlook their existence. Now a man builds a ship, and launches her forth upon the bosom of the deep, himself seated on the helm with triumph; because he knows that, from the principle of the laws of matter, that vessel will be borne upon the bosom of the waters, and ride in triumph

there. Now you are not called upon to make the experiment for the first time ; though a knowledge of the principles God has laid down might enable you to launch forth on the deep. But you have seen soul after soul, millions after millions of the people of God casting their troubles all upon Christ, launching forth upon the ocean of his love, who have been sustained and borne onward till they arrived at the haven of eternal rest.—THE PREACHER.

Sometimes there were more kings than one at Sparta, who governed by joint authorities. A king was occasionally sent to some neighbouring state in character of a Spartan ambassador. Did he, when so sent, cease to be a king of Sparta, because he was also an ambassador ? No, he did not divest himself of his regal dignity ; but only added to it that of public deputation. So Christ, in becoming man, did not cease to be God ; but though he ever was, and still continued to be king of the whole creation, acted as the voluntary servant and messenger of the Father.

To the sun are owing the jewels and the metals that enrich the bowels of our globe ; together with every herb, flower, and tree, that beautify its surface.

“ ’Tis Phœbus warms the rip’ning ore to gold.”

It is the solar influence which gives brilliancy to the diamond, verdure to the leaf, tints to the flower, and flavour to fruits. So the shining of Christ’s presence on the soul gives existence and gradual maturity to the inward graces that enrich the heart, and to the peaceable fruits of righteousness which adorn the life of every true believer in his name.

St. Paul finely illustrates the eternal generation of Christ by a grand idea taken from the material sun. The passage I refer to, is Heb. i. 3, where our adorable Surety is styled “ the forth-beaming of the Father’s glory.” Perhaps no other object in the whole compass of nature could have supplied the apostle with a piece of imagery equally majestic, delicate, and just. Light proceeds from the majestic sun, yet the sun never existed without light. Christ is at once the begotten of the Father, and co-eternal with him. The sun’s rays, or unintermittent efflux of light, are of the same

nature with the sun itself; and Christ is a person in the same essence with the Father Almighty, and joint partaker of all his lovely, glorious, and infinite attributes. Could light be exterminated from the sun, the sun itself as such would inevitably be destroyed; and to deny the deity of Jesus, is virtually to deny the existence of God. For whosoever denieth the Son, hath not the Father; for he that acknowledgeth the Son, hath the Father also.

It is a common saying, "He who buys land, buys stones," and all the weeds and rubbish which belong to the soil. When Christ accepted of us in the decree of election, (when the Father gave, and made us over to him,) and when he bought us afterwards with his blood, he took us, with all our imperfections and wretchedness, for better for worse, as a bridegroom takes his bride, and as a purchaser buys an estate.—SPENCER.

If I build a house, it is ten thousand to one if I do not afterwards find it defective in some respect or other: there is continually something to add, or something to alter, and something that may be improved for the better.—If I write a book, I find it imperfect. Some errata of the printer, some defects in the language, something to add, or something to retrench. So it is with all human works. The work of Christ's righteousness and redemption is the only finished, the only perfect work that ever was wrought among men. God give me faith in it!

Christianity.

When Eudamidas, the son of Archidamus, heard old Xenocrates disputing, he asked very soberly, "If the old man be yet disputing, and inquiring about wisdom, what time will he have to make use of it?"—*Christianity is all for practice.*

Christ will make all things plain to us, for we shall find Christianity the easiest, and the hardest thing in the world: it is like a secret in arithmetic, infinitely hard till it be

found out by a right operation, and then it is so plain that we wonder we did not understand it earlier.

If in the phenomena of nature, and in the moral government of the Deity, there are many things confessedly mysterious, is it not *more* than probable that this will be the case in a revelation of his will, when the subject is equally vast, and in some respects more comprehensive? *Without mysteries*, the Gospel would not be like the works of God.

The evidences of Christianity are of three kinds—historical, internal, experimental. If we look back on the past history of Christianity, we find that it was introduced into the world under very remarkable circumstances. Miracles were performed, and future events foretold, in attestation of its divine origin. These, with the various circumstances connected with them, constitute the historical evidence of Christianity. If now we examine the book itself—its truths, its doctrines, its spirit—we find that it is exactly such, in its nature and tendency, as we should expect a message from Jehovah to such beings as we would be. This is the *internal* evidence. Now if we look upon the *effects which the Bible produces* all around us, upon the guilt and misery of society, wherever it is faithfully and properly applied, we find it efficient for the purpose for which it was sent. It comes to cure the diseases of sin; and it *does cure* them. It is intended to lead men to abandon vice and crime, and to bring them to God, and it does bring them by hundreds and thousands. If we make the experiment with it, we find that it succeeds in accomplishing its objects. This we may call the *experimental* evidence. These three kinds of evidence are so entirely distinct in their nature, that they apply to other subjects. You have a substance which you suppose is phosphorus. For what reason? Why, in the first place, a boy in whom you place confidence brought it for you from the chemists, and he said it was phosphorus. This is the *historical* evidence: it relates to the history of the article before it came into your possession. In the second place you *examine* it, and it looks like phosphorus: its colour, consistence, and form, all agree. This is *internal* evidence. It results from internal examination. In the third

place you *try* it: it burns with a most bright and vivid flame. This last may be called *experimental* evidence: and it ought to be noticed, that this last is the best of the three. No matter what grounds of doubt and hesitation there may be in regard to the first and second kinds of evidence, if the article simply proves its properties on trial. If any one should say to you, "I have reason to suspect that this messenger was not honest, he may have brought something else; or this does not look exactly like phosphorus, it is too dark, or too hard;" your reply would be, "Sir, there can be no possible doubt about it—just see how it burns!" Just so with the evidences of Christianity. It is interesting to look into the historical evidences that it is a revelation from heaven, and to contemplate also the internal indications of its origin; but, after all, the great evidence on which it is best for Christians to rely for the divine authority of the Bible, is its present, universal, and irresistible power in changing character, and saving from suffering and sin.—JACOB ABBOTT.

If the Creator should intend to send a communication of his will to his creatures, we might have supposed that he would, at the same time of his making it, accompany the revelation with something or other which would be a proof that it really came from him. Monarchs have always had some way of authenticating their communications with their subjects or distant officers. This is the origin of the use of seals. The monarch at home possesses a seal of peculiar character. When he sends any communication to a distance, he impresses his seal upon the wax connected with the parchment upon which the letter is written. This gives it authority. No one else possessing such a seal, it is plain that no one can give the impression of it, and a seal of this kind is very difficult to be counterfeited. Various other devices have been resorted to by persons in authority to authenticate their communications. In the same manner we must have expected that Jehovah, when he sends a message to man, will have some way of convincing us that it really comes from him. We could not possibly tell what a pretended revelation comes to us, whether it was really a revelation from

heaven, or a design of wicked men, unless God should set some mark upon it, or accompany it with some indications which bad men could not imitate. The Bible professes to have been accompanied by such marks. They are the power of working miracles and foretelling future events, possessed by those who brought the various messages it contains. It is plain that man, without divine assistance, could have had no such power. If this power, then, really accompanied those who were the instruments of introducing the christian religion into the world, we may safely conclude that it was given them by God ; and as he would never give his power to sanction imposture, the message brought must be from him.—IBID.

Character.

Men are to be estimated by the mass of character. A block of tin has often a grain of silver, but still it is tin ; and a block of silver may have an alloy of tin, but still it is silver. The mass of Elijah's character was excellence, but with alloy.

Common instruments for ascertaining the state of the air do not cause the heat, cold, moisture, or dampness, but only indicate these things ;—so dress, conformity to vain amusements, indifference to the blessings of public worship, do not so much cause your unchristian state, as show the unchristian state you are in.

Flowers, while they captivate us with their beauty, no less astonish us with their variety. Every country has its peculiar species. Some of these love the burning suns of India : some the barren deserts of Africa : and America and New Holland are as much distinguished by flowers of singular and rare beauty, as by their animals, which differ greatly from those of all the rest of the globe. Then, again, there are some flowers which are the natives only of temperate climates, and a few are confined to the snowy regions of the North. Each has also its own select situation and

soil ; some choose the mountain, and some the valley : some flourish best in poor ground, and many are to be found only in the rich pastures. Nor are they less remarkable for their different qualities. In some are combined the qualities of fragrance and beauty ; but those which have little of the latter, have often valuable properties as medicine. Even those which were formerly esteemed poisonous, are now found to be useful to the skilful physician, and class among the most beneficial of his remedies. In short, every combination of beauty and utility that the mind can conceive, and far more than it could have imagined, is to be found in those flowers which are so widely scattered over the fair face of the whole earth. What a pleasing picture of the vast diversity of character which adorns the members of the church of Christ ! The brilliant hues of some flowers, and the sweet fragrance of others, aptly represent those who “adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour in all things,” and whose example diffuses the sweet savour of life and salvation to all around them. But there are others of a humbler class, which have peculiar excellencies of their own, which the skilful eye of the observer can trace with as much ease as the experienced florist discern the beauties of his favourite flowers. In the christian church the gifts and graces of men widely differ. Some are adapted to adorn one station of life, and some another ; these to flourish best in the humble valley of life, and others to bear the rough blasts of the mountain. The soil of poverty is best suited to unfold the qualities of some, and others flourish well amidst the strong sunshine of prosperity, and the fertile soil in which their lot has been planted. All, however, are alike nourished by the same general means of grace, though the Spirit “divideth to every man severally as he will ;” but prayer, the breath of heaven, is the atmosphere in which ALL must live. All must be baptized and watered by the same Spirit, and be fed with a due portion of the wholesome food of God’s word. Thus nurtured and strengthened, every member of the Church, in his proper season and place, like the flowers of the garden, adorns the situation which he fills, becomes a bright and beautiful example of godliness in

his particular sphere of duty, and abundantly proclaims the wisdom and goodness of Him who transplanted him from the wilderness of this world, to a place where he may adorn and magnify the riches of divine grace.—LIGHT FROM THE WEST.

Iron, which is one of the baser metals, may be hammered, and subjected to the most intense heat of the furnace; but though you may soften it for the time, you can never make it ductile like the precious metals. But gold, which is the most excellent of all, is the most pliant and easily wrought on, being capable of being drawn out to a degree which exceeds belief. So the most excellent tempers are the most easily wrought on by spiritual counsel and godly admonitions, but the viler sort, like the iron, are stubborn, and cannot be made pliant.

The good or evil propensities of one age are, with their virtues and vices, transferred to the next. 'Tis extraordinary when an evil child becomes a sober, modest youth, or a dissolute youth becomes a godly man. The seed of the hemlock may pass into another stage, and be seen to blossom into flower, but it still retains its deadly principle. Childhood is as the seed in whose virtue the tree of life is contained. The characters that are cut in the bark, when the tree grows, deeply and visibly remain. 'Tis painful as death to change a sinful life of many years, and begin a contrary course of actions. There are two great branches of folly which spring out of a vicious youth: youth will not do what it can; and manhood afterwards cannot do when it would.

Communion.

It has been the pleasing compact of some, closely joined in heart, but widely distant in place, to look at the same hour on the same luminary, to watch the beam of the same rising moon, or evening star, and thus to imagine a

kind of sensible union, by being alike and at once present to the same beautiful object. How does it heighten and substantiate this device of friendship (which else is comparatively a fruitless and empty refinement) to commune not merely with a bright emblem of the divine bounty, but with the omnipresent Benefactor himself; to pour out our mutual intercession before the "Father of these heavenly lights, with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning." My dearest friend may be in another hemisphere, or, though but a few leagues divide us, a cloud may conceal that star from one which rises in brightness to the other; but if we devoutly intercede for each other's welfare, before Him by whose presence all times are compressed, our supplications, whether offered at one or at different hours, form a real and intimate communion with each other, and with Him—a communion fraught, we trust, not only with soothing sentiments, but with real blessings.—THE PORTFOLIO.

The showers of Britain and Sumatra fall, or flow into the same mighty deep; the tears of christian sympathy poured out to God, though shed in the remotest climates, may be said to drop into the same ocean of loving-kindness, and be mingled there.

If, in the church of the first-born Christians in the earthly Jerusalem, the band of charity was so strict, that 'tis said the *multitude of believers were of one heart and one soul*; how much more intimate and inseparable is the union of the saints in Jerusalem above, where every one loves another as himself? 'Tis recorded of Alexander, that entering with Hephestion, his favourite, into the pavilion of the mother of Darius, then his prisoner, she bowed to the favourite, as having a greater appearance of majesty, thinking him to be Alexander; but, advised of her error, she humbly begged his pardon. To whom the generous king replied, *You did not err, mother; this also is Alexander*. Such was the affection, that whoever was taken of them, the other was taken in him; the less ascending in the greater, without degrading the greater in the less. This is a copy, though a faint one, of the holy love of the blessed.—SPENCER.

He that walks in communion of saints, travels in company; he dwells in a city where one house keeps up another, to which Jerusalem is compared.

If we desire to be preserved from sin, let us avoid engaging company; many persons would resist the force of natural inclination, but when that is excited by the examples of others, they are easily vanquished. A pure stream passing through a sink will run thick and muddy. And the "evil communication" will leave some of its corrupting influence to pollute the purest morals. On the contrary, society with the saints is a happy advantage to make us like them. As waters that pass through medicinal minerals do not come out the same waters, but, being impregnated with their properties, they derive a healing tincture from them, so it is impossible to be much with the Lord's people without imbibing something of their motives and principles, and a desire to be influenced by their spirit. No society can be to us a matter of indifference, but must operate for good, or ill. The present world is a continual temptation. We are in a state of warfare; though not always in fight, yet always in the field, exposed to our spiritual enemies that war against our souls: and our vigilance and care should be accordingly.

Comfort, Consolation.

A believer, with regard to spiritual enjoyments, resembles a barometer. As the silver in this instrument rises, when the sun shines, and the weather is fine; but sinks, when the air is heavy, and loaded with damps; so the Christian's sensible comfort rises when the Holy Spirit's countenance shines upon the soul, but subsides when left to the evil workings of his own heart.

The sun is commonly said to rise and set. This, however, is spoken merely in complaisance to appearances. The truth is, that when the horizon of the earth gets below the

sun, we then perceive his beams, and when the horizon gets above it, we lose sight of them. Here remember, as before, that in all our varying frames of soul, the variations are not in God, but in ourselves. Remember, too, that you must lie low at his feet, if you would bask in the shinings of his face. Get above his word and ordinances, and no wonder if the horror of a great darkness fall upon you.

If your souls draw their comfort from any creature, you know they must outlive that creature, and what then will you do for comfort? Besides, as your comforts are, so are you. The food of every creature is suitable to its nature. You see divers creatures feeding upon several parts of the same herb—the bee upon the flower, the bird upon the seeds, the sheep upon the stalk, and the swine upon the root; according to their nature, so is their food. Sensual men feed upon sensual things; spiritual men upon spiritual things; as your food is, so are you. If carnal comforts can content thy heart, sure thy heart must then be a carnal heart. Yea, and let Christians themselves take heed, that they fetch not their consolations out of themselves instead of Christ. Your graces and duties are excellent means and instruments, but not the ground-work and foundation of your comfort; they are useful buckets to draw, but not the well itself, in which the springs of consolation rise. If you put your duties in the room of Christ, Christ will put your comforts out of the reach of your duties.

The planet Venus preaches an important lesson to the followers of Christ, viz. that the earth was never yet known to come between her and the sun. Whence the languor, and the spiritual declensions, the darkness, and the soul distresses, of many a child of light? Come they not very frequently, from giving way to earthly cares, earthly joys, and earthly pursuits? We let these things shut out the sun. No wonder that we move heavily, and walk in the dark, while we cultivate that “friendship with this world, which is enmity with God.” But if, on the contrary, our “affections are set on things above;” if our treasure and our hearts are with Christ in heaven; we shall, probably, “walk in the light, as he is in the light,” and enjoy an abiding

perception of interest in his precious blood which "cleanseth from all sin."

When a saint is in darkness, all his expedients for delivering himself out of it are vain; they are, literally, dark lanterns, and will not afford him a single gleam to see by. The day will not dawn, nor the shadows flee away, until the Sun of Righteousness arises with healing in his wings. And we can no more command the rising of the spiritual sun within, than we can that of the natural sun without. We can only, like Paul's mariners, cast anchor, and wish for day, "looking unto Jesus."

Hast thou seen the sun shine forth in February, and the sky blue, and the hedge-rows bursting into bud, and the primrose peeping beneath the bank, and the birds singing in the bushes? Thou hast thought that spring was already come in its beauty and sweet odours. But a few days, and the clouds returned, and the atmosphere was chilled, and the birds were mute, and snow was on the ground, and thou hast said that spring would never come. And thus sometimes the young convert finds his fears removed, and the comforts of the gospel shed abroad in his heart, and praise and thanksgiving and a new song put in his mouth. And he deems unadvisedly that his troubles are past for ever. But awhile, and his doubts return, and his comforts die away, and his light is taken from him, and his spirit is overwhelmed, and he is fain to conclude that salvation and all its blessings are not for him. But the spring, though late, shall break at last. "Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me?" Psalm xlii. 11.

Covetousness.

It is a common saying, that swine are good for nothing whilst alive; not good to bear or carry as the horse, nor to draw as the ox; nor to clothe as the sheep; nor to give milk as the cow; nor to keep the house as the dog; but fed

only to the slaughter. So a covetous rich man, just like a hog, doth no good with his riches whilst he liveth; but when he is dead, his riches come to be disposed of: the riches of a sinner are laid up for the just.—SPENCER.

It is said of Catiline, that he was ever not more prodigal of his own, as desirous of other men's estates. A ship may be overladen with silver, even unto sinking, and yet have compass and bulk enough to hold ten times more. So a covetous wretch, though he have enough to sink him, yet never hath he enough to satisfy him; like that miserable caitiff mentioned by Theocritus, first wishing that he had a thousand sheep in his flock; and then when he had them, he would have cattle without number. Thus a circle cannot fill a triangle, so neither can the whole world (if it were to be compassed) the heart of man; a man may as easily fill a chest with grace as the heart with gold; the air fills not the body, neither doth money the covetous mind of man.—IBID.

Old men are usually querulous, impatient, discontented, suspicious, vainly fearful of contempt or want: and from thence, or some other secret cause, are covetous and sordid in sparing, against all the rules of reason and religion. Covetousness is styled by the apostle "the root of all evil;" and as the root in winter retains the sap, when the branches have lost their leaves and verdure, so in old age, the winter of life, covetousness preserves its vigour when other vices are fallen off. Usually the nearer men approach to the earth they are more earthly minded, and, which is strange to amazement, at the sunset of life are providing for a long day.

Man is by nature a social creature, fit for commerce. A covetous body is a *wen* of the body politic, not a *member*; a wen, by sucking the nourishment that is due to other parts, groweth monstrous and ugly in itself, and robbeth the body; so he being altogether *for private gain*, perverteth that which is the cement of all confederacies and societies, a care of the common-weal; bodies are preserved when the *members care one for another*.—SPENCER.

Custom.

When Ulysses, in his travels, had left his men with Circe that witch, she changed them all into divers sorts of beasts, as into dogs, swine, lions, bears, elephants, &c. Ulysses, when he returned, complained that Circe had done him wrong in turning his men into beasts. Circe replied, that the benefit of speech was left unto them all, and so he might demand of them whether they would be changed into men again, or not: he began first with the hog, and demanded of him whether he would be a man again; he answered, that he was more contented with that sort of life than ever he was before; for when he was a man he was troubled with a thousand cares, and one cross came on the neck of another, and one grief followed another; but now he had no care but to fill his belly, and lie down and sleep: and so he demanded of all the rest; but they refused to turn men again, until he came to the elephant, who, in his first estate had been a philosopher; he demanded of him whether he would be a man again; yea, that he would with all his heart, because he knew what was the difference betwixt a man and a beast. Thus creatures given over to their sensual appetites, transformed and changed by Satan into beasts, in their hearts they desire never to return to a better state, but to live still in their swinish pleasures, and to follow their sinful appetites; but those who have the spirit of grace in their hearts, and are fallen into some heinous sin, having tasted of both the states, like the elephant, they cannot be quiet till they are at their former state again.

—SPENCER.

It is said of a prisoner that, standing at the bar indicted for felony, was asked by the judge what he could say for himself; "Truly, my lord," said he, "I did mean no hurt when I stole; it is an evil custom that I have gotten; I have been used to it ever since I knew anything." "Why then," says the judge, "if it be thy custom to steal, it is my custom to hang up thieves." So, if it be any man's custom to swear upon

every slight occasion, it is God's custom not to hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain. Is it any man's custom to be lewd and be drunk? it is God's custom to judge him; whatsoever the sin be, there's no pleading of custom to excuse it, as that they meant no harm, it was against their will, &c. All the fig-leaves that can be gathered and sewed ever so close, will not hide sin from the eyes of heaven. God will certainly bring them to judgment.—
IBID.

Water may easily be drawn up, but no art or industry can make it run backward in its own channel; it was by a miracle that the river Jordan was driven back; and it is very near, if not altogether, a miracle, that a man "accustomed to do evil should learn to do well;" that the tide of sin, which before did run so strong, should be so easily turned. Sin may indeed be resisted and its violent actings restrained, but that the sinner which before was falling hellward, and wanted neither wind nor tide to carry him, should now alter his course, and tack about for heaven, this is a work indeed, and that a hard one too; to see the earthly man become heavenly; to see a sinner more contrary to himself in the way of holiness, is as strange as to see heavy bodies fly upward, or the bowl run contrary to its own bias. Break off the sinful custom, not merely the act. He that would kill Hydra had better strike off one neck than five heads; fell the tree, and the branches are soon cut off.—
IBID.

Creatures.

When we view the creature, as it is annexed to God, and subservient to him, it may have an answerable trust and love. The smallest twig that is fast to the tree may help you out of the water if you lay hold on it. But if it be broken from the tree, it will deceive you, though you hold it ever so fast.

Psalm lxix. 29. A sinner, like a spider, sucks poison out of everything, or, like the sea, he turns the fresh supply of the sweet river waters into salt waters ; so their table, their welfare, become a curse and a snare to them.

The curse of the creature is, as it were, the poison and contagion of it : and let a man mix poison in the most delicate wine, it will, but so much the easier, by the nimbleness of the spirits there, invade the ports of the body, and torment the bowels. Gold of itself is a precious thing ; but to be shackled with fetters of gold, to have it turned into a use of bondage, adds mockery to the affliction ; and far more precious to a particular man is a chain of iron which draws him out of a pit, than a chain of gold which clogs him in a prison ; a key of iron which lets him out of a dungeon, than a bar of gold that shuts him in. If a man should have a great diamond, curiously cut into sharp angles, worth many thousand pounds, in his reins, no man would count him rich, but a miserable and a dead man. This is just the case between a man and the creatures of themselves, without Christ to sanctify them unto us : though the things be excellent in their own being, yet, mingled with our corruptions and lusts, they are turned into poison, into the gall of asps within a man ; they will not suffer him to feel any quietness. "In the fulness of his sufficiency, he shall be in straits ; and while he is eating, the fury of wrath shall rain down upon him."

If a man consider his own former experiences, and the examples of others, that bring the vanity of these earthly things into mind ; how some of his choicest pleasures have now outlived him, and are expired ; how the Lord hath snatched from his dearest embracements those idols which are set up against his glory ; how many of his hopes have failed, of his expectations and presumptions proved abortive ; how much of money,—at one time a sickness—at another a suit—at a third a thief—at a fourth a shipwreck or a miscarriage—at a fifth, yea at a twentieth time, a lust hath consumed and eaten out ; how many examples there are in the world of withered and blasted estates, of the curse of God, not only, like a moth, insensibly consuming, but, like a lion,

suddenly tearing asunder great possessions,—he will not seek happiness in the creature.

The creature can do nothing but as it is commanded by God ; it is the vanity of the creature that it can do nothing of itself, except there be an influence from God ; as for example, take the hand—it moves because there is an imperceptible influence from the will that stirs it. So the creature moving, and giving comfort unto us, it is God's will it should do it, and so it is applied to this or that action. The mechanic uses certain tools in making a piece of furniture ; there is an influence from his art, that guides his hand to the work ; so the creature's working is by a secret concurrence from God, doing thus, or thus, whether it be this way or that way, all is from God.—SPENCER.

Conversion.

A man may be converted by reading, as Luther said he was ; it is the confession of Luther, that the reading of John Huss' works was the main cause of his conversion ; and St. Augustin's taking up of the book, and reading that of the apostle, " not in chambering and wantonness," was, by God's especial favour, a means to draw him out of that puddle of sin wherein he had a long time wallowed. Thus there is a blessing for readers. And there may a fish or two hang on the net, being let down on a heap ; and that's a chance : it is not the net lapped up together that bringeth in the draught, but hauled out at length and spread all abroad that closeth in the fish ; so it is the spreading of the word, the stretching of it out upon every soul present by the work of the ministry, that is the way to catch many ; so that the reason of such ill success in many ministers is not spreading the net, not dilating upon the matter in hand, whereby their preaching seems to be little better than reading.—SPENCER.

Affections to God must be constant. The air (you know)

is light, and yet we call it not a lightsome body, because it is lighted by the presence of another, and when that body is removed, it is dark; for the air is dark in the night, when the sun is absent; as it is light when the sun is present: those only we call lightsome bodies, whose light is abiding and rooted in themselves. So they are not godly persons, that may have some injections of godly thoughts and godly affections cast into them, and be in them for a spirit, and for a little flash, (like a flash of lightning in the air, and soon gone,) but it must be rooted and grounded in a man, so as that it will continue so, as that the exercise of graces, and duties towards God, should be frequent and quotidian, daily to have converse and communion with God, to walk with him, and talk with him, to approve ourselves to him, to set ourselves in his presence, to make a constant trade with him, to be his day's man, to work by the day with him, and withal to hold out to the end.—*IBID.*

The suspension of the ferocity of the savage animals during their continuance in the ark, is an apt figure of the change which takes place in sinners when they enter the true ark, the church of Christ. It may also serve to remind us of the hypocrite's *outward* good behaviour, though his nature is not changed.

If the works of a watch are out of order, it is of no use to be continually setting the hands, they will soon be wrong again; you must go to the watchmaker's to repair the interior mechanism: so it is for no purpose for a vicious man to be now and then attempting some little reformation in outward conduct, he must also pray for the renewal of his heart.

A man often passes through many stages before he becomes truly converted to God. When he is first awakened to serious impressions, and sees his folly of pursuing intently worldly things, to the neglect of the more durable riches, he resembles a boy emerging from his childhood, who throws aside his trifles and playthings for amusements of a higher and more intellectual kind. He now sets himself with all diligence to working out his own salvation in his own strength; multiplies his religious duties, and reforms his bad habits;

yet all this while he is like one who has been employed in new-painting and varnishing a wooden statue, it has no life within. But when the Holy Spirit influences his heart, and "reveals Christ in him," he is in the state of one who has awakened from a dream, (in which he has been acting a fictitious part,) to live and move, and use all his faculties in reality, and enter on the great business of life.

Sometimes, by the force of truth, the outer door of the understanding is broken up, while the inner door of the will remains fast bolted.

Every motion proceeds either from impulsion, or attraction. The motion produced from impulse or strokes is usually violent, irregular, or soon lost. The motion produced by attraction is mild, regular, and lasting. The motion derived from impulse proceeds in a line; but the motion derived from attraction, on the contrary, tends towards the moving power. This will show the manner in which conversion is effected. Conversion is attraction, or drawing. Our Lord declares that the effect of his death "shall draw all men unto him." Thus the cross of Christ draws and attracts. Conversion is the attraction of the cross—it's a drawing nigher and nigher to the power that attracts—the Being that draws us—even to God! Uniformly, and without ceasing, it leads men farther and farther from the world and sin, and brings them nearer and nearer to Christ and to God, until at last they unite, and the convert becomes *one* with Christ, and God.

He that is locked up in a *dungeon*, or otherwise immured within some darksome place, can, and may, easily discover the very moment of time, when either the least beam of the sun, or glimmer of *skylight*, shall break in upon him; whereas, on the other side, he that is in the open air is very sensible that the day is broke, that the sun is up, but cannot make out any certain account of the springing of the one, or the rising of the other. Thus it is in the matter of our spiritual calling; it is possible that a man may know the very time and moment when the day-spring from on high did visit him, when it was the good pleasure of God to dart into his soul the grace of his blessed Spirit, as in the case of St. Paul, the

good centurion, the jailor, the Jewish converts, and some others ; but this is not ordinary. "The wind bloweth where it listeth," (yea, and when it listeth too,) even so the Spirit, both time and place uncertain ; some are called at the first hour, that is, in their infancy or childhood, as Samuel, Jeremy, and John the Baptist ; some in the third hour, that is, in their youth, as Daniel the prophet, and John the evangelist ; others at the sixth hour, in their middle age, as Peter and Andrew : others at the eleventh hour, in their old age, as Gamaliel and Joseph of Arimathea ; and some again not only in the last hour of the day, but even in the last minute of that hour, as the thief upon the cross. So if a man can but make out unto his soul that he is certainly called, it matters not much for the time when, nor the place where, both of them being so uncertain.

Doth Christ compel men against their wills to become subject unto him? No, in no wise. He hath ordered to bring them in by way of voluntariness, and obedience. And herein is the wisdom of his power seen, that his grace shall mightily produce those effects in men, which their hearts shall most obediently and willingly consent unto ; that he is able to use the proper and genuine motions of second causes to the producing of his own most holy, wise, and merciful purposes. As we see human wisdom can so order, moderate, and make use of natural motions, that by them artificial effects shall be produced ; as in a clock, although there is a plan laid down for the division of time, yet it is the natural motion of the weight or plummet which causes the artificial distribution of hours and minutes, and the clock of itself marks each succeeding portion, independent of any other agent ; as in a mill, although the machinery is so constructed as to answer a given purpose, yet the natural motion of the wind or water causeth an artificial effect in grinding the corn. How much more, then, shall the wisdom of Almighty God, whose weakness is stronger, and whose foolishness is wiser than men, be able so to use, incline, and order the wills of men, without destroying them, or their liberty, as that thereby the kingdom of his Son shall be set up among them ; by the secret, ineffable, and most sweet ope-

ration of the Spirit of grace, opening the eyes, convincing the judgment, persuading the affections, inclining the heart, giving an understanding, quickening and knocking at the conscience, a man shall be swayed unto the obedience of Christ, and shall come unto him so certainly as if he were drawn, and yet so freely as if he were left unto himself. For in the calling of men by the word, there is a 'trahere' and a 'venire.' The Father draweth, and the man cometh. *That* notes efficacy of grace; and *this* the sweetness of grace. Grace worketh strongly, and therefore God is said to draw; and it worketh sweetly too, and therefore man is said to come.

When you are weighing things in the balance you may add grain after grain, and it makes no turning or motion at all till you come to the very last grain, and then suddenly that end which was downward is turned upward. When you stand at a loss between two highways, not knowing which way to go, as long as you deliberate you stand still; all the reasons that come into your mind do not stir you; but the last reason which resolves you sets you in motion. So it is (most often) in a sinner's heart and life; he is not changed, (but preparing towards it,) while he is deliberating whether he should choose Christ or the world. But the last reason which comes in and determines his will to Christ, and makes him resolve and enter a firm covenant with him, this makes a greater change than even is made by any work in the world. For how can there be a greater than a turning of the soul from the creature to the Creator? So distant are the terms of this change. After this *one turning act* Christ hath that heart, and the main heart and endeavours of the life, which the world had before. The man hath a new end, a new guide, and a new master.

Converting grace, like thaw, softens the heart that was hard, moistens and melts it into tears of repentance, and makes good affections to flow which were before stopped up; the change, like the thaw, is universal, yet gradual, very evident, yet often unaccountable.

In the matter of conversion see to it that you do not set your own experience as a standard to try others by. Many

will say you are not Christians, because you have not had the same terrible experience with themselves. You may as well say to a neighbour you have not had a child, for you were not in labour all night. The question is, whether a real child is born, not how long was the preceding pain, but whether it were productive of a new birth, and whether Christ have been formed in your hearts ; it is the *birth* proves the reality of the thing.

An unrenewed man may reform. Under the influence of shame or remorse, or terror, or interest, he may improve his conversation, his temper, his manner. But if this change has not sprung from the interference of Him who alone sets men free from sin—if it does not spring from a knowledge and faith of his mediation, and from those principles which this acknowledgment of his mediation involves, and if the change be not more radical and deep than we have now supposed, the soul is as really under the dominion of evil as it was before. In that soul the reign of God is established no more than ever. It owns a law above his law—the law of its own inclinations and interests. And the struggle, to use a figure, is only a contest for precedency among the various bands of the enemy—not a contest betwixt the interests of the enemy and those of God. It is the conflict of corruption with corruption ; not of corruption with grace. It is an effort to give a new form to the old government, whilst all its worst corruptions are retained, not to subvert and abolish that government, and to substitute a new and holy one in its place.

It is only by scrutinising the heart that we can know it. It is only by knowing the heart that we can reform the life. Any careless observer, indeed, when his watch goes wrong, may see that it does so by casting his eyes on the dial-plate, but it is only the artist who takes it to pieces, and examines every wheel separately, and the spring, and who, by ascertaining the precise cause of the irregularity, can set the machine right, and restore the disordered movements.

One Mr. Simon Brown, an eminent dissenting minister in London, became at one time so low spirited, as actually to believe that his soul was annihilated, and that he had no

more soul than a stock or a stone. And yet he wrote, and preached, and prayed, and reasoned with so much power, liveliness, and good sense, that he was more like a man with two souls, than like a man with none. Some of the Lord's people who are disposed to question the truth of their conversion, live so conscientiously, feel their imperfections so deeply, prize Christ so highly, and long for his presence so ardently, that they demonstrate themselves to be converted persons. Just as Mr. Brown, who persuaded himself that he had no soul, proved that he had one by the very arguments which he brought against it.

It is difficult to determine, by the eye, the precise moment of daybreak ; but the light advances from early dawn, and the sun arises at the appointed hour. Such is the progress of divine light in the mind ; the first streaks of the dawn are seldom perceived, but, by degrees, objects till then unthought of are disclosed. The evil of sin, the danger of the soul, the reality and importance of eternal things, are apprehended, and a hope of mercy, through a crucified Saviour, is discovered, which prevents the sinner from falling into absolute despair ; but for a time all is indistinct and confused. But the light increases, the sun arises, the glory of God in the person of Jesus Christ shines in upon the soul. As the sun can be seen only by its own light, and diffuses that light by which other objects are clearly perceived, so Christ crucified is the sun in the system of revealed truth, and the right knowledge of the doctrines of his cross satisfies the inquiring mind, and proves itself to be the "one thing needful."

Sometimes you shall have impetuous and heavy showers bursting from the angry clouds. They lash the plains, and make the rivers flow. A storm brings them, and a deluge follows them. At other times, thin gentle dews are formed in the serene evening air. They steal down by slow degrees with insensible stillness : so subtle that they deceive the nicest eye ; so silent that they escape the most delicate ear ; and when fallen, so very light, that they neither bruise the tenderest, nor oppress the weakest flowers. Very different operations ! Yet each concurs in the same beneficial end,

and both impart fertility to the lap of nature. So I have known some persons reclaimed from the unfruitful works of darkness, by violent and severe means. The Almighty addressed their stubborn hearts, as he addressed the Israelites of Sinai, with lightning in his eyes, and thunder in his voice. The conscience, smitten with a sense of guilt and apprehension of eternal vengeance, trembled through all her powers; just as that strong mountain tottered to its centre. Pangs of remorse and agonies of fear preceded their new birth. They were reduced to the last extremities, almost overwhelmed with despair, before they found rest in Jesus Christ. Others have been recovered from a vain conversation, by methods more mild and attractive. The "Father of spirits" applied himself to their teachable minds, in "a still and small voice." His grace came down like the rain into a fleece of wool; or as these softening drops, which now water the earth. The kingdom of God took place in their souls, without noise or observation. They passed from death unto life, from a carnal to a regenerate state, by almost imperceptible advances. The transition resembled the growth of corn: was very visible *when* effected, though scarcely sensible *while* accomplishing.

We do not mean to assert that any new faculties of mind will be implanted, but that there will be a new impulse given to those which you do possess—new motives, new desires, new actions, new conduct. Nay, all obey the hand of another master, and are under the direction of a new influence, like a harp of which the strings remain the same; but the tones and music are various, as the hand that moves them varies. With one it may send forth harsh and discordant sounds; but, played on by another, the same chords ravish the senses with their rich and flowing music.

One hinderance of conversion is foolish self-love, that makes men unwilling to know the worst of themselves, and so keepeth them from believing their sinfulness and misery; and causeth them to presume and keep up false deceiving hopes that they may be saved, whether they are converted or not; or that they are converted when indeed they are not. They think it every one's duty to think well of themselves, and

therefore they will do so ; and so, while they hope they are converted already, or may be saved without conversion, no wonder if they look not seriously after it. Like many a sick man that I have known in the beginning of a consumption, or some grievous disease, they hope there is no danger in it ; or they hope it will go away of itself, and it is but some cold ; or they hope that such or such medicine will cure it, till they are past hope, and then they must give up these hopes and their lives together, whether they will or no. Just so do poor wretches by their souls. They know that all is not well with them, but they hope God is merciful, that he will not condemn them ; or they hope to be converted some time hereafter ; or they hope that less ado may serve their turn, and that their good wishes and prayers may save their souls ; and thus, in these hopes they hold on, till they find themselves to be past remedy, and their hopes and they be dead together. I speak not this without the Scripture ; Prov. xi. 17 ; Job xxvii. 8, 9 ; xi. 20. There is scarce a greater hinderance of conversion, than these false deceiving hopes of sinners.

Lady Huntingdon was once speaking to a workman, who was repairing a garden wall, and pressing him to take some thought concerning eternity, and the state of his soul. Some years afterwards, she spake to another on the same subject, and said to him, "Thomas, I fear you never pray, nor look to Christ for salvation." "Your Ladyship is mistaken," answered the man ; "I heard what passed between you and James at such a time, and the word you designed for *him* took effect on *me*."—"How did you hear it?"—"I heard it on the other side of the garden, through a hole in the wall, and shall never forget the impression I received."—Thus will the blessed Spirit even make his way through the hole of a wall, rather than an elect sinner shall die unconverted.

Suppose a child accidentally falls into a pit, and some person comes to help him out. Instead of thankfully accepting the offer, he says "No ; I will not have you to help me out ; I wish some one else to assist me." He is told by his father, that he shall not be assisted by any other person ;

yet he still prefers remaining in the pit to accepting that person's offer ;—does it not indicate strong aversion to him ? Yet it is precisely thus that the sinner treats Christ. He is exposed to danger, from which none but Christ can deliver him. Yet, rather than accept his assistance, he tries every other method, again and again ; and when he finds all his efforts unsuccessful, he practically says, “ I had rather perish than be saved by Christ ! ” How justly might the Saviour take him at his word, and leave him to perish !

Suppose a number of persons standing by a river's side. They are invited to drink of its waters, but they are not thirsty, and therefore do not desire them. At length their thirst is excited, and they look round for a vessel with which to take up some water. But their vessels are all filled with some worthless thing, which they are as yet unwilling to part with. But as their thirst increases, they become willing to relinquish what they had thought of so much value, and, finally, emptying their vessels of this rubbish, and receiving the water, they quench their thirst. Thus it is with sinners : Jesus Christ invites them to come to him, the fountain of living waters. But they decline his invitations—their hearts being filled with the treasures of earth. They do not thirst for Christ, till God takes away the love of this world and its vanities, and the Holy Spirit fills them with desire to come to him. Then they hunger and thirst after righteousness, and are prepared to receive Christ.

Covenant.

We forget the comfortable condition we are in under the covenant of grace. Weaknesses do not break covenant with God ; they do not between husband and wife : and shall we make ourselves more compassionate than Christ, who maketh himself a pattern of love to all ?

The difference between the mercy of the first and second covenant (and it is a great difference) is this : God did out of mercy propose salvation unto Adam, as an infinite reward

of such a finite obedience as Adam was able, by his own created abilities, to have performed: as if a man should give a day-labourer a hundred pounds for his day's work, which perform indeed he did by his own strength, but yet did not merit the thousandth part of that wages which he receives. But God's mercy unto us is this, that he is pleased to bestow upon us, not only the reward, but the work and merit which procured the reward; that he is pleased in us to reward another man's work, even the work of Christ our head: as if, when one captain only had, by his own wisdom and hand, discomfited and defeated an enemy, the prince, notwithstanding, should reward his alone service with the advancement of the whole army which he led.

The covenant of works seems to have been discovered all at once to Adam on the day on which he was created. But the covenant of faith was not unfolded all at once, but at sundry times, and by several steps and degrees. As the beauty of the year increaseth to perfection by degrees—from winter's nakedness and deformity to the buds of herbs and trees; from buds to fragrant flowers and blossoms; from flowers and blossoms to green growing, and ripe fruit. Or as the light of day groweth by degrees to its perfect glory. First it is daybreak, day dawning, or the peering of the morning; then it is clear daylight: then sunrise: then brighter and brighter day; at last brightest noonday. Thus this better covenant was but obscurely and imperfectly discovered after the fall, in the promise of Christ. Gen. iii. This was the covenant's *daybreak*, or first dawning of it to mankind. Then somewhat more clearly to Noah, where it is first styled a covenant. This was the covenant's *daylight*. More clearly and fully after this to Abraham, with the promise, among other things, that in his seed all the nations of the earth should be blessed. This was the covenant's bright *sunrise*: then it began to shine out with bright and beautiful rays of grace. More fully and perfectly after this at Mount Sinai, the object of which was principally to direct them to Christ and his righteousness, (by the types and ceremonies,) as the only remedy against sin and misery. More clearly and fully after this to king David, with whom

God made *an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure*. More clearly and fully yet after this to the Jews in the Babylonish captivity—to set up *his tabernacle and sanctuary* in the midst of them for evermore, *He being their God, and they his people*. These gradual discoveries of God's covenant at Mount Sinai, to David, and to the captive Jews, were as *the brighter and brighter day*. Finally, after all these, the new covenant breaks forth most clearly and completely, being founded upon Christ already exhibited, and incarnate, and upon far better promises in Christ, &c. And this was the covenant's *noontide, brightest or perfect day*.

Because of the incapacity and weakness of the church in her primordial state, we find God making known his covenant to them, according to what they were able to receive. At first, in their infancy, he disclosed but the A B C of the covenant till the time of Abraham : then he leaves them to spell it from Abraham till Moses: afterwards he taught them to read it more perfectly from Moses till Christ: and lastly, he makes them fully to understand it since the incarnation of Christ. Thus, as the church grew riper, the covenant of faith shined forth clearer and clearer. And this, in order that the graces of the church, her faith, her hope, and patience, might be gradually exercised and improved more and more in waiting, and that, by these gradual discoveries of the covenant, God might gradually advance the excellency of his glory to the highest, every additional discovery of his covenant proportionably augmenting the glory of his free grace, love, mercy, and goodness, to his elect.

Contentment.

One observes concerning manna, when the people were contented with the allowance that God gave them, then it was very good; but when they would not be content with God's allowance, but would be gathering more, then, says the text, there were worms in it; so, when we are content

with our conditions, and that which God disposeth of us to be in, there is a blessing in it ; but if we must be reaching out for more than God hath allotted, or to keep it longer than God would have us to keep it, then there will be worms in it ; a canker to eat it, a moth to fret it, nothing at all that is good.—SPENCER.

Marcus Curio, when he had bribes sent unto him to tempt him to be unfaithful to his country, he was sitting at dinner with a dish of turnips, and they came and promised him rewards : “ Well,” saith he, “ the man that can be contented with such fare as I have, will not be tempted with your rewards. I thank God I am contented with this fare ; and as for rewards, let them be offered to those who cannot be content to dine with a dish of turnips as I do.” The truth of this is apparently seen ; the reason why many men do betray their trust, and by indirect means strive to be rich, is, because they cannot be contented to be in a low condition ; whereas the man that is contented with a hard bed and a bare board, is shot free for thousands of temptations that prevail against others, even to the damning of their souls.—IBID.

By the art of navigation, with great pains and industry, men can fetch in the silks of Persia, the spices of Egypt, the gold of Ophir, the treasures of the East and West Indies. O but by the art of contentment, a man may stay at home, and fetch in the comfort of any condition whatsoever ; that is, he may have that comfort by contentment, that he would have if he had the very things themselves.—IBID.

When Æsop, with the rest of his fellow slaves, were put to carry burthens to a city, Æsop chose to carry the victuals ; every one laughed at this, that he, being the weakest, had elected the heaviest burthen ; away they went together, and after some miles they went to breakfast,—his burthen was the lighter for that ; then to dinner,—it was lighter still ; then to supper,—now it was easy ; the next day, they had eaten up all his burthen, and he went empty to the city, whither they, being laden, could not reach. Thus it is in the world ; the covetous man chooseth gold for his burden ; the proud fine clothes, and a fine equipage ; the ambitious, mountains of honour ; every worldling their several luggage ; but a child

of God contents himself "with food and raiment," and God's good pleasure; and though such a lot may seem a heavy burden, yet he who has no other may go with it the lighter to heaven.—IBID.

The wheels of a chariot move, but the axletree moves not; the sails of a mill move with the wind, but the mill itself stands still; the earth is carried round its orbit in the heavens, but its centre moves not;—all emblems of contentment. And thus it is that a Christian is like Noah in the ark, which though tossed with the waters, he could sit and sing in it; and a soul that is gotten into the ark of contentment, sings and sails above all the waters of trouble; when it meets with motion and change in the creatures round about on every side, it stirs not, nor is moved out of its place; when the outward estate moves with the wind of providence, yet the heart is settled through holy contentment; and when others shake and tremble through disquiet, the contented spirit can say with David, "O God, my heart is fixed, my heart is fixed." Psalm lvii. 7.—IBID.

Charity.

Amongst other things in the learning of the Egyptians, there is to be seen the picture and figure of charity, hieroglyphically set out like a child that is naked, with a heart in his hand, giving honey to a bee that wanteth wings.

1. As a child humble and meek as Moses, not churlish and dogged like Nabal. 2. Naked, because the charitable man must not give his alms for ostentation to be seen of men. 3. With a heart in his hand, because the heart and hand of a charitable man must go together,—he must be a cheerful giver. 4. Giving honey unto a bee, not to a drone,—relieving poor men that will labour, not lazy beggars that will take no pains. And lastly, to a bee without wings,—to such as would gather honey if they were able, would

work if they could; but the want of wings shows lack of strength, health, and other the like abilities make them unable to help themselves; thus to do is not charity mistaken, misapplied, ill bestowed, but seasonable, suitable, and well regulated.—IBID.

It is written of Plato, that when he did give to a poor profligate wretch, his friends very much admired that Plato, the great divine philosopher, would take pity on such a wretched miscreant; but he, like himself, in such misty days as those were, made answer, "I show mercy to the man, not as he is wicked, but because he is a man of my own nature." His answer was good and warrantable; for if we consider our first parents, we shall find ourselves bound by the same obligation to do good unto all men; "There is neither Jew nor Greek, bond nor free, neither male nor female, in Christ Jesus."

When Alexander set forward upon his great exploits, before he went from Macedonia he divided amongst his captains and friends all that he had; for which when one of his friends reproved him, saying that he was prodigal because he had retained nothing for himself, the answer which Alexander gave was this, that he had reserved much unto himself, namely, the hope of the monarchy of the world, which by the valour and help of these captains and nobles he hoped to obtain. And thus surely, he that giveth to the poor may seem to be prodigal, yet in respect of the hope that he hath of profit, he is frugally wise; neither is this hope such as Alexander's was, which depended on the uncertainty of war, but such as is grounded upon the certainty of God's word. PROV. xix. 17.—SPENCER.

Alms is compared to seed, 1 Cor. i. 9, and seed uses not to be carelessly scattered, but to be sown with discretion, according to ability. [See Acts xi. 29.] Though we give away but water, we need not give away fountain and all.

Charity to the body, and not to the soul—such benevolence overlooking its immortality, is infinitely more unreasonable than the kindness which with regard to the body would busy itself with all promptitude and assiduity of concern in

carefully binding up a wounded finger, while it left a violent and deadly disorder to prey upon the vitals with unheeded, unmitigated, and fatal fury.

When stewards receive the wages of the whole family, it is not to keep them, but to distribute them. Job xxxi. 17.

It has been frequently wished by Christians, that there were some rule laid down in the Bible, fixing the proportion of their property which they ought to contribute to religious uses. This is as if a child should go to his father and say, "Father, how many times in the day must I come to you with some testimonial of my love? how often will it be necessary to show my affection for you?" The father would of course reply, "Just as often as your feelings prompt you, my child, and no oftener." Just so Christ says to his people, "Look at me, and see what I have done and suffered for you, and then give me just what you think I deserve. I do not wish anything forced."

Conscience.

Conscience does the work of a monitor, and a judge. In some cases, conscience is like an eloquent and fair spoken judge, who declaims not against the criminal, but condemns him justly. In others the judge is more angry, and affrights the prisoner more; but the event is the same. For in those sins where the conscience affrights, as in those which it affrights not, supposing the sins equal, but of different natures, there is no other difference, but the conscience is a clock which in one man strikes aloud and gives warning, and in another the hand points silently to the figure, but strikes not; but by this he may as surely *see* what the other *hears*,—that his hours pass away, and death hastens, and after death comes judgment.

If we ward off, or attend to, the first incursion of disease, the body will be preserved. And the believer that is led simply, and filially to walk with God in a state of perpetual

unfolding of the heart to God, taking little sins before him, opening the heart when there has been a wound received, by that process finds his conscience become exceedingly tender.

Reason can toil through many steps, and lie content with small acquirements; but let the conscience be once roused, let her come steadily to the business of salvation—to what is right, and what is wrong—to holy and unholy—she is quick as the eagle's wing, and rapid as the lightning of God in the darkness of the storm. In a moment she pierces through a thousand intricacies, shivers into atoms the dull heartless sophistry which is opposed to her course, and breaking into the chambers of the soul, scares guilt with the brightness of truth!

Many are the means adopted to quiet a conscience, which will one day speak in thunders to the soul. Men will deny themselves the use of worldly amusements, give something in charities, and abound in the exercise of religious ordinances, yet with hearts so pre-occupied by worldly interests and affections, that the most solemn declarations that we must “be born again of the Spirit,” and made “new creatures,” can make no impression. It is true they thus escape all painful convictions of sin, all the horrors of a disturbed conscience, all distressing fears about the future; but this apathy of soul is but as the awful calm of nature which ushers in the bursting of the earthquake or volcano; or it may be likened to the dead repose of nature which precedes the approaching storm on some Alpine summit: the winds are hushed, not a leaf is seen to move, and the solitary bird seeks his sheltered nook—an awful stillness prevails, but it is the stillness of the gathering tempest, which is about to sweep in desolation all around it, and from which the thunders of an angry heaven are prepared to burst. Such is that deathlike stupor of the conscience which is only to issue in desolation, and the blackness of darkness for ever.

As long as Adam maintained a conscience pure towards God, he was happy: but having once taken the forbidden fruit, he tarried a while there, but took no contentment there-

in; the sun did shine as bright, the rivers ran as clear as ever they did, birds sang as sweetly, beasts played as pleasantly, flowers smelt as fragrant, herbs grew as fresh, fruits flourished as fair; no punctilio of pleasure was either altered or abated; the objects were the same, but Adam's eyes were otherwise; his nakedness stood in his light, a thorn of guiltiness grew in his heart, before any thistles sprang out of the ground, which made him not to seek for the fairest fruits to fill his hunger, but the biggest leaves to cover his nakedness. Such is the torture of a wounded conscience, that it is able to unparadise paradise, and the burthen thereof so insupportable, that it is able to quell the courage and crush the shoulders of the hugest Hercules, of the mightiest man upon the face of the earth: who can bear it? Prov. xviii. 14.—SPENCER.

It is recorded of that reverend martyr Bishop Latimer, that he took special care in the placing of his words before Bonner, because he heard the spies walking in the chimney behind the cloth, setting down what he said. So ought we circumspectly to look to all our sayings and doings, for conscience is a scribe or register, sitting in the closet of our hearts with pen in hand, who makes a diurnal of all our ways, sets down the time when, the place where, the manner how, things were performed, and that so clear and evident, that go where we will, do what we can, the characters of them shall never be cancelled or razed out, till God appears in judgment.—IBID.

It is a witty parable, which one of the fathers hath of a man that had three friends, two whereof he loved entirely, the third in an inferior degree. This man, being called in question for his life, sought help of his friends; the first would bear him company some part of the way; the second would lend him some money for his journey, and that was all they could or would do for him; but the third, whom he least respected, and from whom he least expected, would go all the way and abide all the while with him; yea, he would appear with him and plead for him. This man is every one of us, and our three friends are the flesh, and the world, and our own conscience. Now, when death shall summon

us to judgment, what can our friends after the flesh do for us? they will bring us some part of the way to the grave, and farther they cannot; and of all the worldly goods which we possess, what shall we have? What will they afford us? only a shroud and a coffin, or a tomb, at the most. But a good conscience that will live and die with us, or rather live when we are dead, and when we rise again, it will appear with us at God's tribunal; and when neither friends nor a full purse can do any good, then a good conscience will stick close by us.—IBID.

Corruptions.

Some of the old "chambers of imagery," the "nests of unclean birds," are suffered to remain to the last; but a fair portion seems swept and garnished for the master's use: the soul renewed in this temple, the Spirit of God is said to dwell in it when he manifests himself to his people. Here we will suppose all the virtues and graces of the Spirit to grow; and in proportion as they thrive and spread their lovely branches abroad, we may imagine the dark and gloomy chambers to be screened from observation. But sudden hurricanes overtake them—or a long season of drought—or wintry days, and the leaves fall off, and the hidden recesses again become visible. They had *never* been removed, but concealed for a time; so that when the covering was taken away, there they were in their former deformity! And thus it is with man.

We naturally linger after what we fancy is liberty, and are hardly brought under the yoke of duty; and the more spiritual the duty is, the more backward are we. Corruption gains ground for the most part by neglect. It is as in rowing against the tide,—one stroke neglected will not be gained in three, and therefore it is good to keep our hearts close to duty.

When Christ comes, there will be opposition from a cor-

rupt nature. When he was born, all Jerusalem was troubled; so when he is born in any soul, the soul is in an uproar, because the heart is unwilling to receive him, and submit to him.

Although a good man may be incident to a passion, a well-grown Christian hath seldom such sufferings. To suffer such things sometimes may stand with the being of virtue, but not with its security. A garrison which is shut up within its walls, for fear of the enemy who is without, may not be wholly conquered; but is much in the condition of prisoners, and has lost its liberty while its enemies have possession of the country. So if passions rage up and down, and transport us frequently and violently, we may keep in our forts and in our dwellings; but virtues are restrained, and apt to be starved, and will not hold out long.

When the sun shines with some power, and the year gets up, we observe, though we may have frost and snow, yet they do not lie long, but are soon dissolved by the sun. O! this is a sweet sign that the love of Christ shines with a force upon the soul, that no corruptions can lie long in the bosom, but they melt into sorrow, and bitter complaints. That is the decaying soul where sin lies frozen and bound, till little sense of or sorrow for it appears.

Such is the pertinacity and close adhesion of our corruptions, that they cleave as fast to us as the very powers and faculties of our souls—as heat unto the fire, as light unto the sun. Yet sure we are that He who forbade the fire to burn, and put blackness upon the face of the sun at midday, is able also to remove our corruptions as far from us as he has removed them from his own sight.

In regard to our corruptions, we may learn something from the difference of glasses. You behold yourselves in your common looking-glasses, and see yourselves so fine that you admire your persons and dress. But when you view yourself in a microscope, how much may you behold in that fine skin to be ashamed of; what disfigurement to the eye! and instead of smoothness, irregularity, uncomeliness, and even impurity. So, if you will look upon yourself through the glass of faith, that glass would show you much of the corruption

of your sinful nature still cleaving to you; your tempers crooked, your graces misshapen and deformed, and so much corruption cleaving to every action of your lives that would make you sin-sick that you have known God so long, and are like him so little.

I have read of an English painter, who, after only meeting any stranger in the streets, could go home and paint that person's picture to the life. Let us suppose that one whose likeness is taken in this manner should happen to see, unexpectedly, his own picture. It would startle him. The exact similitude of air, shape, features, and complexion, would convince him that the representation was designed for himself, though his own name be not affixed to it, and he is conscious that he never sat for the piece. In the scriptures of truth we have a striking delineation of human depravity through original sin. Though we have not sat to the inspired writers, the likeness suits us all. When the Spirit of God holds up the mirror, and shows us to ourselves, we see, we feel, we deplore, our apostasy from, and our inability to recover the image of his rectitude. Experience proves the horrid likeness true; and we need no arguments to convince us, that in, and of ourselves we are spiritually "wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked."

Our old corrupt nature is eventually destined to fall before the power of grace. Its case is that of an ancient castle that had been for days assaulted by the battering-ram. It was long before the stroke of that engine made any sensible impression, but the continual repetition at length communicated a slight tremor to the wall; the next, and the next, and the next blow increased it. Another shock put the whole mass in motion, from the top to the foundation; it bends forward, and is every moment driven farther from the perpendicular, till at last the decisive blow is given, and down it comes. And so must fall the strong tower of corruption. At first it seems to defy the efforts of grace; but by little and little its wall gives way, for "the weapons" in the divine warfare are mighty through God for the pulling down of these strongholds;" till at last it shall be shaken to its deep

foundations, and fall a glorious ruin for the saint to rejoice over. "We shall be satisfied with his likeness."

"The heart doth go after covetousneses," when a man makes all the motions of his soul wait upon his lusts, and drudgeth for them, and bringeth his heart to the edge of the creature. For the world doth not wound the heart, but the heart woundeth itself upon the world. As it is not the rock alone that dasheth the ship, without its own motion, being first tossed by the wind and waves upon the rock; so it is a man's own lust which vexeth his spirit, and not the things alone which he possesseth.

Every one knows that the seeds of plants and trees must be cast into the earth and become decomposed before vegetation will take place. This is one of nature's wonders, or rather of nature's God. Let us imagine, if we can, a man who had never seen this order exemplified in this particular instance, and he would be just as ready to disbelieve that plants and trees could spring from seed cast into the earth, as we are to calculate upon the certainty of the fact. What resemblance is there indeed between the future plant, and the seed from which it springs? How little could mere reason, without experience, venture to predict the result that follows from a few handfuls of grain scattered over the soil! So, when overwhelmed with our corruptions, and we can scarce discover the existence of any graces, and then look at the height and stature they have attained to in others, we are ready to doubt whether such a simple principle as faith, and that so weak, can ever spring up in the abundance of christian fruitfulness we shall one day attain to. But what if this faith be a *seminal* principle, as the seed which contains the mighty oak? Let us take courage in the assurance of its progressive growth, and destined increase.

We will, to convince those who are Christians only in title and profession, and pretend invincible impediments against performing their duty, propound the moral excellencies that shined in some heathens in the government of the passions and affections. Socrates, who had a fiery nature, that inclined him to sudden anger, yet attained to such a constant equal temper, that when provoked by injuries, his countenance

was more placid and serene, his voice more temperate, his words more kind and obliging, than before. Plato, surprised with passion for a great fault of his servant, took a staff to beat him, and having lifted up his hand for a stroke, stopped suddenly; and a friend coming in, wondering to see him in that posture, said, *I chastise an angry man*, reflecting with shame upon himself: thus he disarmed his passion. When Alexander had conquered Darius and taken his queen, a woman of exquisite beauty, he would not have her brought into his presence, that his virtue might not be violated by the sight of her. Scipio, having taken a town in Spain, and among them a noble virgin very beautiful, resigned her untouched, with her ransom of great value, to the prince to whom she was contracted. And Phocion, who had deserved so highly of the Athenians, was condemned unjustly to die; his son attending him to receive his last commands immediately before his death, he charged him never to revenge it on the Athenians. How will some of the heathens rise up in the great day, and condemn Christians!

As corruption and infection could not by the ambient air enter into our bodies, if our bodies did not consist of such a nature as hath in itself the causes of corruption, no more could sin, which is a general rot and corruption of the soul, enter into us through the allurements or provocation of outward things, if our souls had not first of themselves received that inward hurt, by which their desire is made subject to sin, as the woman's desire was made subject to her husband, and (as philosophers say) the matter to the form. The causes of sin are to be ascribed to our own concupiscence; the root is from our own hearts. It is confessed that Satan may instil his poison and kindle a fire of evil desires in us, yet it is our own flesh that is the first mover, and our own will which sets the faculties of the soul in combustion.

Carlota the harlot thus bragged against Socrates. "All thy philosophy cannot alienate one of my lovers from me; but my beauty can fetch many of thy scholars from thee." He made her this answer: "No wonder, for thou temptest man to the pleasing path of perdition; but I persuade them to the troublesome way of virtue." And it is observed that philoso-

phers of divers sects turned to the Epicures, but never did any Epicure accept of any other sect of philosophy. Thus it is that men are easily drawn by their own natural corruption. Men are naturally disposed to be evil, to be holy and good is the difficulty ; we are all of us born sinners, there is much ado to make us saints. For corrupt nature to adhere unto a doctrine that holdeth out carnal liberty, there is no more wonder in it, than for stones to fall downwards, or for sparks to fly upwards ; but to mortify our earthly members, to deny ourselves, to forsake this present world, and cleave unto God, this goes against the hair ; fain would we be saints, but we are loth to be holy.—SPENCER.

Indwelling sin and unholy tempers do most certainly receive their death's wound in regeneration ; but they do not quite expire, until the renewed soul is taken up from earth to heaven. In the mean time, these hated remains of depravity will, too often, like prisoners in a dungeon, crawl toward the window (though in chains), and show themselves through the grate. I do not know, whether the strivings of inherent corruption for mastery be not frequently more violent in a regenerate person, than even in one who is dead in trespasses ; as wild beasts are sometimes the more rampant and furious for being wounded.

A person of the amplest fortune cannot help the harbouring of snakes, toads, and other venomous reptiles on his lands ; but they will breed, and nestle, and crawl about his estate, whether he will or no. All he can do is, to pursue and kill them whenever they make their appearance ; yet, let him be ever so vigilant and diligent, there will always be a succession of those creatures to exercise his patience, and engage his industry. So it is with the true believer in respect of indwelling sin.

Being employed in the garden, I was affected to see how much the weeds came on faster than the herbs and plants. Just so do corruptions thrive and grow in my soul. Yet this comforts me—the herbs, most of them, are better rooted than the weeds ; they are not so easily pulled up. The good part shall not be taken away. If I am growing on the root Christ, no man shall ever be able to pull me thence—“ kept by the

power of God through faith unto salvation."—THE PORTFOLIO.

Morality, without the purifying influence of the gospel, is inadequate to change the heart from its natural bias to evil. It may indeed restrain us from the commission of outwardly notorious crimes, while the disposition to sin continues unchanged. Such effects are but the receding waves repulsed, and broken for a moment on the shore, while the great tide is rolling on and gaining ground with every breaker.

Death, Spiritual.

Ephes. v. 14. By sleep St. Paul means a state of insensibility to things as they really are in God's sight. When we are asleep, we are as absent from this world's action as if we had no longer any concern in it. It goes on without us; or if our rest be broken, and we have some slight notion of people and occurrences about us, if we hear a voice or a sentence, and see a face, yet we are unable to catch these outward objects justly and truly, we make them part of our dreams, and pervert them till they have scarcely a resemblance to what they really are: and such is the state of man as regards religious truths. Many live altogether as though the day shone not upon them but the shadows still endured, and for the greater part are but faintly sensible and alive to spiritual truths. They see and hear as people in a dream; they mix up the holy word of God with their idle imaginings: if startled for a moment, yet they still relapse into slumber, they refuse to be awakened, and think their happiness consists in their continuing as they are. Alas! they see not the vision of truth which they would see were their eyes open, but see a vague, extravagant, defective picture of it, as a man sees when he is asleep.

The spiritual sleep is understood by comparison with the natural; in the *natural*, instruments of sense and motion are bound up; the apprehensive faculties that discover dangers,

and the active powers that resist or avoid them, are suspended from their exercise. All the powers and energies which belong to the living man are locked up, and both body and mind are as inert and passive as if there were no life. So in the spiritual sleep the soul lies in a state of total inaction. Its faculties and apprehensions are dead to spiritual things; it neither sees, hears, nor understands God's truth; and its senses lie covered with gross darkness. It sleeps in ignorance of dangers that threaten it, and unpreparedness to resist them. And thus it lies like a dead, helpless thing, till Christ brings light, and calls upon this sleeper to arise from the dead.

When at sea, it is the practice to attach heavy weights to a corpse, and it is then lowered into the deep waters. But the corpse, though carried downwards into the deep, unfathomable gulf, is utterly unconscious of its sinking state, though it continues to descend till it meets the bottom. So the soul which is spiritually dead is continually thrust down and overwhelmed with the burden of its sins. Unconscious of its destination, it is irresistibly carried onwards. Its path is the downward path of destruction. It has a weight and a burden which it can no more cast off, than the corpse can disengage itself from its iron weights. Unconscious of ruin, it continues to fall until it is swallowed up in the depths of perdition. Nothing but the mighty hand of God can arrest it while plunging downwards in the gulfs of ruin.

Danger.

A prudent man foreseeth the evil, &c.—Prov. xxii. 3. It is the highest folly not to look out after dangers. He that walks in the midst of snares and serpents, and yet goes on confidently, and without consideration of his danger, as if his path were all smooth or safe, will one time or other be entangled or bitten. So men at sea that are in the midst of rocks or shelves, and consider it not, will hardly avoid a shipwreck. Livy tells us that Philopœmen, a wary Grecian commander, wherever he went, though alone, was still

considering all the places that he passed by, how an enemy might possess them, and lay ambushes in them, and to his disadvantage, if he should command an army in those parts. Hereby he became the most expert and wary captain of his age. So should a Christian do.

If a traveller, journeying on the high road, comes at last to a place where there are many cross roads, and no directing post, it is ten to one that he takes the wrong road, and so wanders away from the place he is seeking; neither is there any chance of his recovering his error, and finding the place of his destination without a guide. So the broad and beaten high way of this life's journey is intersected with innumerable paths of error, while there is but one straight and narrow way leading to the God and heaven which man desires; and without the guide, the Holy Spirit, he will never strike into that path—"Christ the way." And as in the case of the traveller, if one should join company with him on the way, and use every artifice to lead him astray, his difficulties would be vastly greater; how much more so is this the case of the poor sinner who is blinded by Satan, who lieth in wait to deceive him every step of his way!

The prayer of Agur, *Give me neither poverty nor riches, &c.*, is founded in much reason. There is great hazard both in prosperity and adversity, but more in fulness than in want. He that rows in a shallop near the shore needs not the skill and courage of a pilot that directs a ship through tempestuous seas, and who with his ill-governed ship must sink to the bottom. But in calamities, vexation and immoderate sorrow hinder the free exercise of reason and religion, and often increase men's sins; as when physic does not work well it increases the disease, and hastens its effects. If the sun should make a search, it would discover but few among the numberless Christians that enjoy prosperity without insolence, or suffer adversity without impatience, or such dejection as exceeds the rule of the passions. To endure the burning Line or frozen Pole without distempering the blood and humours, and injury to the constitution, proceeds from a sound and firm constitution. To receive no hurtful impres-

sions by great changes of condition, discovers a habit of excellent grace and virtue in the soul.

The gospel is a proclamation of free mercy to guilty creatures—an act of grace to rebels. Now, though a rebel should throw away his pistols, and determine to go into the woods, and make his mind better before he goes to court and pleads the act; he may indeed not be found in *arms*, yet being taken in his reforming scheme he will be hanged. So will it be with those who delay coming to Christ. Hell is paved with good intentions.

It is recorded of Archias, a chief magistrate in one of the Grecian states, that he was unpopular in his government, and had excited the hatred of many of his people, who conspired against his life. The day arrived when the fatal plot was to be executed. Archias was more than half dissolved in wine and pleasure, when a courier from Athens arrived in great haste, with a packet which contained (as afterwards appeared) a circumstantial account of the whole conspiracy. The messenger being admitted into the presence of the prince, said, “My lord, the person who writes to you these letters, conjures you to read them immediately; they contain serious affairs.” Archias replied, laughing, “Serious affairs to-morrow:” and so continued his revel. On the same night, in the midst of that noisy mirth, the end of which is heaviness, the assailants rushed into the palace, and murdered Archias with his associates; leaving to the world a striking example of the evil of procrastination.

The point of obedience God presseth to *now*. *Now, while it is called to-day, harden not your hearts.* Pompilius, the Roman ambassador, when he made delays and excuses, the emperor drew a circle on the ground, saying, “*intra hunc—* answer me before thou stirrest from this place.” So God standeth upon his authority, and will have a present answer; if he say to-day, 'tis flat disobedience for you to say to-morrow. You are charged in his name, as you will answer the contrary, you say, No, I will please the flesh a little longer; it may be just with God, if you refuse him, never to call you more.

If we had a lease of our lives, yet what hope of grace when we have resisted the Spirit of God all our lives?

Every day will prove worse and worse. A man may easily pass over the head of a brook, but when he goeth down thinking to find it narrower, 'tis so broad that he cannot pass at all. Every delay brings on hardness of heart on our part, and a new desertion on God's part. It will be hard to untwist the former web which thou hast been so long weaving. That soul must needs be in perplexity at the hour of death, that seeth the day spent, and the business appointed him not yet begun, and disease disabling him from entering on his journey. It is as if a traveller seeth the sun setting as he is entering upon his journey; the evening of the day, and the morning of the task, do not well agree together.

Death.

Your bereaved friend is in the upper part of the presence chamber; you are yet for a season in the lower. But the distance is imaginary. You are both still gazing at one and the same object; you by faith, he in open vision. Christ is the uniting point.

God, to prevent all escape, hath sown the seeds of death in our very nature, so that we can as soon run from ourselves as from death. We need no feller to come with the hand of violence to hew us down; there is in the tree a worm which grows out of its own substance, that will destroy it; so in us there are those infirmities of nature, that will bring us down to the ground. Our death was bred when our life was first conceived; and as a breeding woman cannot hinder the hour of her travail that follows in nature upon the other, so neither can man hinder the hour of death, with which his life is big.

Take any small quantity of matter, a grain of sand for instance, and cut it into two parts; these two parts might again be divided, had we instruments sufficiently fine for the purpose; and if by means of pounding, grinding, and other similar methods, we carry this division to the greatest pos-

sible extent, and reduce the body to the finest imaginable particles, yet not one of the particles will be destroyed, and the body will continue to exist, though in this altered state. And so will it be with the particles of the human body which are indestructible, when death shall take it to pieces.

A common solicitude, and a common hope, bind the hearts of believers together. Death divides them, but it is only as the successive ranks of a host are divided when summoned in turn to advance and pass singly a perilous defile. Beyond that strait of momentary gloom and danger all again are to be marshalled, and every one to join his commander.

“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord.” To resignation St. Paul adds complacency. We are *better* pleased to be absent from the body, and present with the Lord. A valiant man will venture on wounds and death, but is not pleased with them, but in reference to so excellent an object and occasion. The word which we read, “willing,” signifies, to approve or like well, not as merely judicious, but complacential approbation. What! to have all my good bound in what I cannot keep! and to be in continual dread of what I cannot avoid! What can be more disconsolate? How grievous will it be to be torn out of the body! not to resign the soul, but have it drawn forth like a rusty sword out of the sheath; a thing which our utmost unwillingness will make the more painful, but cannot defer. How doth that part of the creation that is inferior to you, of fruits springing up out of the earth, and growing to ripeness and maturity, with husks, shells, or other integuments, which then fall off, such as never ripen, they and their enfoldings together, teach you! Esteem it your perfection, when your shell will fall off easily; and cleave not so close as to put you to pain when it is to be severed from you.—THE PORTFOLIO.

If a man were tied fast to a stake, at whom a most cunning archer did shoot, and, wounding many about him, some

above, and some below, some beyond, and some short, some on this hand, and some on that; and the poor wretch himself so fast bound to the stake, that it were not any way possible for him to escape; would it not be deemed madness in him, if, in the mean time, forgetting his misery and danger, he should carelessly fall to bib and quaff, to laugh and be merry, as if he could not be touched at all? Who would not judge such a man beside himself, that should not provide for his end? Such bedlamites are most amongst us, who knowing and understanding that the most expert archer that ever was, even God himself, hath whet his sword and bent his bow, and made it ready, and hath also prepared for him the instruments of death, and ordained his arrows, Ps. vii. 12, 13, yea, that he hath already shot forth his darts and arrows of death, and hath hit those that are above us, superiors and elders; such as be right against us, companions and equals; such as be ever near us, kindred and allies; on the right hand our friends; on the left our enemies; yet we think to be free, sit still as men and women unconcerned, not so much as once thinking that our turn may be next.—SPENCER.

As the setting of the sun appears of greater magnitude, and his beams of richer gold, than when he is in the meridian; so a dying believer is, usually, richer in experience, stronger in grace, and brighter in his evidences for heaven, than a living one.

When a person is going into a foreign land, where he never was before, it is comfortable for him to consider, "Though I am embarking for an unknown country, yet it is a place where I have many friends, who are already settled there: so that I shall be, in fact, at home the instant I get thither." How sweet for a dying believer to reflect, that, though he is yet a stranger in the world of spirits, still the world of spirits are no strangers to him. God, his Father, is there; Christ, his Saviour, is there; angels, his elect brethren, are there; saints, who got home before him, are there: and more will follow him every day. He has the blood and righteousness of Christ for his letters of recom-

mendation, and the Holy Spirit for his introducer. He also goes upon express invitation from the King of the country.

If I wear a rose in my bosom, it scents my whole person. Has the Saviour a place in my breast, he communicates the fragrance of his merits to my soul, and his Spirit fills the atmosphere through which I move, as it were with the breath of heaven. Even in death the rose is sweet, passing sweet, and sweetens every place where it lies. Thus the rose of Sharon has given the fragrance of life to the very chambers of death and the grave, and to that wardrobe of the saints where their material garments are to be laid up till the morning of the resurrection, then to be brought forth beautiful and fresh, fit for the court of heaven.—EAST.

Meditations of death are usually very unprofitable. It is with most men as it is with a flock of sheep, which graze till the shepherd rushes in amongst them, and lays hold of one of them for the slaughter, and this presently frightens them, making them leave their food and run scattering about the fields; but no sooner is the terror over, but they flock together again, and feed as securely without thought of death or danger as before, until the slaughterer again selects his prey. So truly is it with most men, when death *suddenly* lays his hand upon some friend or relative, and arrests him amidst the crowd of thoughtless mortals. Some extraordinary circumstance in the death of others will turn their attention from their usual occupations, and call up frightful images of the grave and eternity. But these thoughts soon wear off, and they return to the same round of worldly vanity and wretched security as before, until the thunders of the Almighty are again heard, and Death, this appalling monster, is again seen in pursuit, and hurrying his victim to the slaughter, when the same scene is acted over again—they tremble—the dead is interred, and the grave filled up, and the irrevocable sentence is forgotten—"Tis appointed unto all men once to die," &c., until the pit of destruction again yawns, and swallows them up.

If you look upon a tablet, where you behold a rich and powerful man, and upon a poor contemptible beggar, you

neither envy one, nor despise the other, because you know them to be shadows and no truths: the same judgment we ought to make of things themselves; for all are but shadows, and little more than nothing: and as in a comedy or farce, it imports little who plays Alexander, and who the beggar, since all are equal when the play is done;—so are we after death.—SPENCER.

An eminent author suggests a motive which we may, with humble reverence, conceive as inducing the Father of mercies to choose the precise moment which he does for calling each of his children out of this world. He read an account of an accidental fire, by which a house in the neighbourhood of London was consumed. The father and mother escaped from the flames, bearing, as they first supposed, all their treasures with them. But on reckoning them up, the father discovered that the youngest child, then an infant, had in the confusion of the moment been left behind in an upper chamber. He instantly rushed back in the midst of the conflagration. He ascended the stairs, and was seen by the assembled crowds of anxious spectators to enter the apartment, now illuminated by the flames. He flew to the bed—seized the child—enfolded him in his arms—and, just as he was on the point of bearing him off in triumph, the floor gave way, and both were precipitated into the devouring element. Upon reading this, he could scarcely describe his feelings. In much weakness he was disposed to wonder why a merciful Providence should thus requite an act of such heroic tenderness. But after a moment's pause, the following reflection came to his relief. If the saying of the wise may be applicable here, "where the tree falleth there it shall lie;" if precisely as our state is at the instant of death, so will our character be fixed for ever,—how could this person have been summoned at a more auspicious moment? To mortal eyes, indeed, no sight could have been more agonising, than that of a man perishing in so generous a struggle for the deliverance of his child. Such is the dark side of the picture which we see. But how glorious the reverse presented to the assembly of invisible spectators! Amidst what joyful acclamations might these two have as-

cended from the flames into the regions of the blessed ! How might the angels have rejoiced—with what transport might the spirits of the just be filled, when this parent entered the gates of heaven with his infant in his arms ; the one to live for ever amongst the band of innocents, the other to take his station with those who “lost their life in this world, that they might keep it unto life eternal!”—

WOODWARD.

“Death swallowed up in victory.” Earth presents not a spectacle of equal grandeur to that of a Christian who has power to wrest the dart of the king of terrors from his hand on the very confines of an eternal world. His calm but lofty tone is the language of the conqueror, though in the midst of infirmity, death, and judgment. It is like the half hour before sunset—in the midst of nature’s grandest and most majestic scenery—when there is not a breath to agitate the frailest leaf, or ripple the glassy smoothness of the water’s surface—it is the sublime of tranquillity.

It is said of Cleobis and Biton, that in absence of the horses, they drew their mother’s chariot to the temple themselves, for which obedient act of theirs she prayed, that they might both of them be rewarded with the greatest blessings that could possibly happen from God to man ; but so it happened that they were both of them found dead in their beds the next morning. News thereof was brought to their mother, as matter of great misfortune, which she in a manner slighted, saying, I will never account myself unfortunate, that was the mother of two such sons, whom the gods have invested with immortality for their pious and obedient actions. Shall a pagan mother, having no other light but that of dark nature, take it for a divine favour that her two sons did so early quit this life, and shall christian parents, or any other within the pale of the church, such as are better enlightened, repine and look sour upon heaven and upon God, when in mercy he has done for theirs, not what is pleasing to them, but what is most fit and commodious for both ; nothing being done but for the best to them that love him, so that, for the most part, life is not so much taken

away, as death given for a special favour and advantage.—
SPENCER.

Put the case that one man should give unto another many loaves of bread, conditioned that he should every day eat one; but if the party should come to know that in one of them lay hid a parcel of deadly poison, yet in which of them it was he should be utterly ignorant, O how careful would he be in tasting any of them, lest he should light upon that which might prove his fatal destruction. Thus it is that God hath given unto us many days,—to some more, to some less,—but in one of these he hath, unknown to us, conveyed the bitter sting of death; and it may so fall out, that in the day of our greatest rejoicing, a deadly cup of poison may be reached out unto us. Death, like an unbidden guest, may rush in upon us, and spoil all our mirth on a sudden. O how watchful, how diligent, should the consideration of these things make every one of us to be, to look upon every day as the day of our death, every breathing the last breathing we shall make; to think upon the ringing of every passing bell, that ours may be next; upon hearing the clock strike, that there is one hour less to live, and one step nearer to our long home, the house appointed for all living.—
IBID.

Division—Differences.

No discords are like those of the brethren; the nearer the union, the greater the separation upon a breach; for natural ties being stronger than artificial, when they are once broken, they are hardly made up again, as seams when they are ripped may be sown again; but rents in the whole-cloth are not so easily remedied.—Prov. xviii. 19.

In the ringing of bells, whilst every one keeps his due time and order, what a sweet and harmonious sound they make! all the neighbouring villages are cheered with the sound of them; but when once they jar and check each other, either jangling together, or striking preposterously, how harsh and unpleasing is the noise! So that as we testify our public rejoicing by an orderly and well-timed peal, so when we would signify the town is on fire, we ring the bells backward in a confused manner. It is just thus in church and commonwealth; when every one knows his station, and keeps their due ranks, there is a melodious concert of comfort and contentment; but when persons will be clashing with each other, the discord is grievous and extremely prejudicial. And so in the Church, ta away discipline, and the doctrine will not be long after.—
SPENCER.

I have read or heard of a certain champion that came forth out of an army, and challenged any one of the other army to fight with him hand in hand. At last there steps forth a man to meet him; and they being met to fight, and many of both armies gotten round to behold and see what would become of it, who should fall and who should stand; at last, saith one of the two, "Who are you for?" Saith the other, "Sir, I am for you, and I am come forth to save your life. Why," said he, "should we like fools kill one another, to make sport for these beholders?" So they threw down their weapons and embraced one another, and so parted with love, to the admiration of all that did behold them. Now, beloved, things are grown to a great height, and there is too much dissension among professors, and all men are upon the tip-toe at this time to see who shall fall, and who shall stand. But now, after all our animosities, if we should step up one to another, and embrace one another, how would this glorify God, and make religion glorious in the eyes of the world! O why should we that are professors, kill, wound, or abuse one another, to make sport for our common enemies that behold us? Believe it, believe it, it is *not* too late, it is not too late to love one another.—
IBID.

As you cannot have light without variety of colours, so you cannot have thought without difference of opinion. The rainbow, the creature of light, presents the loveliest picture of unity—and yet the variety of its colours constitutes its peculiar charm. Suppose that a man of science were to conceive the idea of reducing it to an uniform whiteness, and that it were possible by a chemical process to decompose this harmonious crescent, and to abstract from it colour after colour; the bow itself would speedily vanish from the view, leaving the disappointed reformer to gaze on the dark cloud on whose bosom it rested. So the narrow-minded and cold-hearted bigot, not content to find in the Church substantial agreement amidst circumstantial variety, would reduce all to one single point of his own vision: and thus the faith of the Gospel vanishes under this rude and violent process. In matters connected with religion, there may be difference without opposition—variety without discord—shades of difference without real diversity of sentiment. It could never be intended that the people of God should all hold the same opinions; if so, how could the apostle Paul say in reference to minor points of belief, “Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind?”—REV. JAMES GODKIN.

Opinions are, in some sense, the features of the mind; and there will always be a diversity of mental features during the present dispensation of things. The elect will never perfectly resemble each other till they perfectly resemble Christ in glory. I have seen a field here, and another there, stand thick with corn. A hedge or two has parted them. At the proper season the reapers entered. Soon the earth was disburthened, and the grain was conveyed to its destined place; where, blended together in the barn or in the stack, it could not be known that a hedge once separated this corn from that. Thus it is with the Church. Here it grows, as it were, in different fields; severed, it may be, by various hedges. By-and-bye, when the harvest is come, all God’s wheat shall be gathered into the garner, without one single mark to distinguish that once they differed in the outward circumstantials of modes

and forms. Hence appears, not only the illiberality, but also the absurdity, of being at daggers drawn with other people on account of differences merely extrinsic and circumstantial. Narrow as the way is which leadeth unto life, it is yet broad enough to admit persons of divided judgment in things indifferent. There may be several paths in one and the same road; and shall I be so weak as to suppose that a professing brother is not in the way to everlasting happiness, only because he does not walk arm in arm with me, and tread in my particular track? I grant that there is but one road to heaven; namely, an interest in the atonement and righteousness of Christ; for "No man cometh to the Father but by him." I believe, however, and feel myself unutterably happy in believing, that this only avenue to eternal rest admits of much greater latitude than bigots of all denominations are aware of. Let, therefore, the travellers to the city of God bear in mind that amiable exhortation of Joseph to his brethren, "See that ye fall not out by the way." To these truly evangelical and truly benevolent sentiments, I deem it my honour and happiness to subscribe with hand and heart.

Philosophers say there cannot be vacuity in the world; the world could not stand, but would be dissolved, if every part were not filled, because nature subsists by being one; if there were the least vacuity, then all things would not be joined in one, there would not be a contiguity of one part with another: this is the reason why water will ascend when the air is drawn out of a pipe to fill it; this is to prevent division in nature. O that we had but so much watchfulness in us, that when we see there is like to be any breach of union, we would be willing to lay down our self-ends, our self-interests, and to venture ourselves to be anything in the world but sin, that so we may still be joining, still uniting, and not rending from each other.

If two ships at sea, being of one and the same squadron, shall be scattered by storm from each other, how shall they come to the relief of each other? If, again, they clash together and fall foul, how shall the one endanger the other and herself too? It was, of old, the Dutch device of

two earthen pots swimming upon the water, with this motto, "If we knock together, we sink together." And most true it is, that if spleen or discontents set us too far one from another, or choler or anger bring us too near, it cannot but that intendment or design, whatsoever it be, like Jonah's gourd, shall perish in a moment, especially if the viperous and hateful worm of dissension do but smite it.—
SPENCER.

If Christians, who have a matter of difference, would graciously agree to meet with each other in prayer, and to pray kindly for each other before the throne of grace; surely if they meant the attainment of that right and truth which they prayed for, they might soon find it out and settle it accordingly; but it is the flesh that comes in and mars all; one cannot stoop, and the other will not. They are not so wise as Luther's two goats, that met upon a narrow plank over a deep water, they could not go back and they dared not fight; at length one of them lay down while the other went over him; and so peace and safety attended both. Why should not believers try this method?

Duty.

God took especial care that the bird sitting over the eggs in her nest should not be hurt, Deut. xxii. 6; but we find nothing to secure her if found abroad. In doing the duty of our place, we have Heaven's word for our security; but on our own peril be it if we wander; then are we, like Shimei, out of its precincts, and lay ourselves open to some judgment or another: it is alike dangerous to do what we are not called to, and to neglect and leave undone the duty of our place.

God when he created the heavenly bodies appointed them their respective paths in the regions of space. To each he gave its proper impulse, having previously fitted

it for the performance of the revolution assigned it; and in their respective orbits he has ever since upheld them, so that they all without exception fulfil the ends for which they were created. Thus in the new creation God has appointed to all their destined course through the vast expanse of moral and religious duty. He has also at the time of its new creation given to each soul the impulse necessary for it, together with all the qualities and dispositions proper for the regulation of its motions according to his will; and he yet further, by his continued and invisible agency, preserves them in their appointed way. But further than this the metaphor must not be pressed, for the heavenly bodies have no consciousness or volition, we have both: they too carry with them nothing that can cause an aberration, whilst we, alas! deviate from the path assigned us, in instances without number. Still, however, in the event the purposes of God are at last accomplished, as with them, so with us.

Augustus the emperor, hearing that a gentleman of Rome, notwithstanding a great burden of debt wherewith he was oppressed, slept quietly and took his ease, desired to buy the bed that he lay on: his servants marvelling thereat, he gave them this answer, that it seemed unto him to be some wonderful bed, and worth the buying, whereon a man could sleep that was so deeply involved. Surely, if we did but consider with ourselves the duty and debt we owe to God, to man, to our country, to our family, to home-born and strangers, especially to the household of faith, it would make us vow with ourselves never to suffer our eyelids to slumber, nor the temples of our head to take any rest until we had engaged ourselves to finish that charge whereunto we are appointed, and perfect the account wherewith we are entrusted.—SPENCER.

It was the speech of Mr. Bradford the martyr, that he could not leave a duty till he had found communion with Christ in the duty, till he had brought his heart into a duty-like frame: he could not leave confession till he had found his heart touched, broken, and humbled for sin; nor petition till he had found his heart taken with the

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beauties of things desired, and carried out after them ; nor could he leave thanksgiving, till he had found his spirit enlarged, and his soul quickened in the return of praises : just like that of St. Bernard, who found God in every duty, and communion with him in every prayer ; this was true, sincere, complete christian duty. And thus it is that the soul taken with Christ, desires and converses with him in prayer, in hearing, and meditation ; and the soul, so taken up with Christ, that duty doth not content it, if it find not Christ in the duty ; so that if the end of a duty hath not left it on this side Christ, it hath left it so far short of true comfort.—IBID.

Endeavours for the time to come often hinder and spoil faith. A man, when he sees his former simpleness and want of faith, and hath suffered the wreck of all his former estate, is apt to begin, of his own cost, to build a new ship to set to sea in, and lades it with a new stock, with a new ware of duties, which he never did before, and launches it into profession ; and thinks by his own rowing and haling in the end to get to Christ, who goes as fast from him as he makes after him, while he thus goes out in his own strength. But if he would tie his cock-boat to the ship of God's free grace, and commit himself to sea with it, and suffer the stream of it, and the gales of the Spirit to carry him on in the use of means, he might attain to faith, and to the righteousness of God. Rom. ix. 32. The Jews sought it not by faith, but as it were by the works of the law. The people of Israel, if they would have gone into Canaan by the way of faith, in God alone, who offered to cast out their enemies before them, they might have done it ; but that way they rejected through unbelief, and then set to it by their own strength ; but they were beaten back by their enemies, and God commanded them to go back again, even to the brink of the Red Sea : so doth God deal with souls that are gone far into the wilderness, and are nigh believing and laying hold, yet subject themselves not to God's way of working faith, but attempt it by their own strength ; and this casts them behindhand, and they are to begin the work anew ; and so they are brought thereby as far off as they were at

first, and need to be humbled of those their new endeavours, and then they are fit to enter. God hath said, that no man shall prevail with his own strength. 1 Sam. ii. 6, 7.

Our duties, giving glory to God, and doing homage to him, are nothing to his advantage, but only for ours : our duties towards him being like vapours ascending from the earth, not at all to refresh the clouds, but to return back in fruitful and refreshing showers.

Though the total neglect of secret duties, in religion speaks a person to be a hypocrite, yet the performance of duties in secret will not demonstrate thee a sincere person ; hypocrisy is, in this, like the frogs brought on Egypt—no place was free from them, no, not their bed-chambers ; they crept into their most inward rooms. And so doth hypocrisy into chamber duties, as well as public ; indeed, though the places be secret where such duties are performed, yet the matter may be so handled, and is by some hypocrites, that they are not secret in their closets ; like the hen who goes into a secret place to lay her egg, but by her cackling tells all the house where she is, and what she is doing.

It is not only, or chiefly, on our knees, or with our bibles, or in our churches, that we are engaged in acts of the highest religion, but also when we perform aright the happy duties of social life, and feel the holy impulses of human affections. In the former offices we contemplate God, in the latter we become images of God, faint reflections of his infinite love and goodness to the children of men.

Perhaps an apter simile cannot be formed to illustrate social life than that presented by the planets encircling the sun ; while they harmoniously perform their daily revolutions and their annual circuits, and while they act upon the moons which subordinately revolve around them, the whole orderly system obeys each impulse of attraction received from the central orb ; to him they turn for light and warmth ; and the face of each planet, while beholding his brilliant glory, reflects his bright image, and becomes itself a luminary. Had man preserved entire his original likeness to his Creator, he would have displayed the divine likeness not only in his soul—not only in his bodily glory and endow-

ments, but likewise in his every minutest relation with other beings and things. Another very remarkable, and, I believe, designed coincidence, may be traced between the planetary and the social system : the one and the other are maintained in action and in order by an exactly similar principle, called attraction in the spheres, and *love* in the hearts of mankind ; and by this attraction or love, not only are the planets in the sky, and Christians upon earth, drawn mutually towards each other, and also drawn naturally towards each other ; but also drawn simultaneously towards their central source of life, and light, and happiness.—CHRISTIAN LADY'S MAGAZINE.

It is not required of us to show our ability, but our readiness. Our weakness and our inability doth not cut the bond of our duty. We send young children to school, we teach them to take up a book, to look at the letters, to show thereby what it is we would have them do, and what it is we intend to bring them up to. So doth God himself with us. And we like and approve it in little children that they will sit at school thus with a book in their hand, rather than be still at home, careless, playing with babies' rattles, and the like. We expect no more of them, nor our heavenly Father of us.

How often hast thou found thyself at the entrance into a duty becalmed, as a ship which at first setting sail hath hardly wind to swell its sails, (while under the shore and shadow of the trees,) but meets a fresh gale of wind when got into the open sea ! Yea, didst thou never launch out to duty as the apostles to sea, with the wind on thy teeth, as if the Spirit of God, instead of helping thee on, meant to drive thee back, and yet hast found Christ walking to thee before the duty was done, and a prosperous voyage made of it at last ? Abraham saw not the ram which God had provided for his sacrifice, till he was in the mount. *In the mount of prayer God is seen* ; even when the Christian does oft go up the hill with a heavy heart, because he can as yet have no sight of him. Turn not therefore back, but on with courage, he may be nearer than thou thinkest on. *In that same hour*, saith Christ, *it shall be given unto you.* Matt.

x. 19. *In the day, said David, that I cried, thou answeredst me, and gavest me strength in my soul.* Ps. cxxxviii. It is no more than the promise gives us security for; *the way of the Lord is strength.* Just as it is with a man, who at first going out on a journey feels a lassitude and feebleness in his limbs, but the further he goes the more strength he gathers, as if there arose strength out of the ground he walks on. The greater deadness and barrenness thy heart (to thy own sense) lay under, and the less hope thou hast to get out of the indisposition, the more joyful will the quickening presence of God be to thee. The assistance that thus surpriseth thee beyond thy expectation will be a true *Isaac*, a child of joy and laughter.

It is easy to keep that armour bright which is daily used, but hanging by the walls till it is rusty it will ask some time and pains to furbish it over again: if an instrument be daily played upon, it is easily kept in tune; but let it be but a while neglected and cast into a corner, the strings break, the bridge flies off, and no small labour is required to bring it into order again. And thus also it is in things spiritual, in the performance of holy duties, if we continue them with a settled constancy, they will be easy, familiar, and delightful to us; but if once broken off, and intermitted, it is a new work to begin again, and will not be reduced to the former estate but with much endeavour and great difficulty.
—SPENCER.

Education.

The gospel alone opens its warm bosom to the young. Christianity alone is the nurse of children. Atheism looks on them as on a level with the brutes. Deism, or scepticism, leaves them to every random influence, lest they catch a bias. The Romans exposed their infants. Barbarians and ancient tribes offered them as burnt sacrifices to Moloch. Maho-

metanism holds mothers and infants as equally of an inferior cast. Hindooism forgets the infant she bears, and leaves it to perish on the banks of the Ganges. The Chinese are notorious as infanticides. Christianity alone contemplates them as immortal creatures, and prescribes for their tuition for heaven. And the nearer the time that the rising of the Sun of Righteousness approached, the warmer and more intense did the interest of the church show itself in regard to the young. Moses gave directions on the subject. Joshua and Abraham commanded their households after them. David declared how the young were to purify their way; and Solomon distinctly enjoined, "Remember thy Creator in the days of thy youth;" but it was reserved for Him who spake as never man spake, to press that sentence, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven." The temple of Juggernaut presents a grave; the mosque, contempt; infidelity, neglect for children. The bosom of the Son of God alone finds them a nursery and a home.

It is important to distinguish between actual failure, and failure as to the production of visible effect. It appears more has been effected by education than is really apparent. The water has been frozen, and to bring the ice even to the state of cold water, a considerable quantity of caloric has been employed. They have expended much fuel, taken much pains, enough to make the water boil had it been cold water when they began; but though, when they put their hand in the vessel, they now feel the water cold, even that is an advance upon the ice. So when they saw the state of crime, however they might lament it, they consider what the extent of evil would have been but for so much religious education. In calculating the good done, the evil prevented must be considered, and if this is not so apparent, it is not less real.

Let not that be considered a case of failure, in which visible effects are not immediately apparent. The farmer, sometimes, in turning over his ground, brings within the warmth of the sun seeds and roots long buried in the ground, without any exhibition of vitality, now destined to

flourish. Over the seed sown in the infant mind it is possible a vast heap of rubbish may be cast, and the failure of the experiment may be deplored ; but the seed is *there*, and it may be, years afterwards, some upturning of the ground, some shaking of the rubbish, may awaken recollections of the past ; the old feeling may revive, and after years of forgetfulness, the instruction of infancy may bear fruit, and prove that the seed which has been sown is the incorruptible seed of the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever !

The Jewish rabbis observe a very strict method in the instruction of their children, and others, according to their age and capacity. At five years old they were *filiis legis*, sons of the law, to read it. At thirteen they were called *filiis precepti*, sons of the precept, to understand the law ; then they received the passover as a sacrament, for even children did eat it, as a remembrance of their deliverance out of Egypt, and then also they were purified. At fifteen years old they came to be *Talmudistæ*, and went to deeper points of the law, and talmudisk doubts. Thus did the Jews, and let not Christians fall behind them, in propagating the truth of Jesus Christ their master. Let children be well instructed, principled, and catechised, in the fundamentals of the christian religion ; for, without catechising, the people perish for want of knowledge. In a word, catechising is as well a family as a church duty.—SPENCER.

Experiences.

If a man but see his deficiencies, then by a single glance of the eye may he also see how the doctrines of the gospel and these deficiencies fit to one another ; and thus, by an act of intuition, may a man without learning, but with a conscience simply awakened, be made to perceive what no erudition, and no elaborate contemplation of the articles of orthodoxy will make another man to perceive whose conscience is

unawakened. It is somewhat as if a fragment of anything was broken away from some mass of which at one time it formed a part. All the hollows and all the protuberances on one surface will be in a state of most accurate adjustment with the corresponding protuberances and hollows upon the other. But it is not looking, however intently, to one of these surfaces, that we shall come to ascertain the truth of this separation ; or if re-union be possible, the place at which the re-union should be made. It is not by the most strict and scientific measurement of the various angles and unevennesses which have been made at the place of disruption, if we have only one side of the fracture to look upon. But if we have both sides to compare the one with the other, we may, with the rapid inspection of a moment, perceive what the labour of a whole life expended on the inspection of one side could not have enabled us to perceive. We may come at once to the belief, that here at one time a part was rent away—and this is the very fragment which has fallen off—and that on the rock from which it was detached, we behold its precise and certain counterpart—a conclusion to which we never should have come by the single contemplation of the precipice that is above us, but to which we come immediately, and as if by the light of intuition, on comparing it to the dissevered piece that is beneath us. And such is the certainty of our religious experience.—DR. CHALMERS.

There are many high and heavenly things announced to us in the New Testament. And there are earthly things too, such as the hidden things of the heart, for the full disclosure of which the eye of conscience must be opened, that we may perceive how truly it is that the Bible tells us of our wayward and wilful alienation from God—and how righteously therefore he may hold us in the light of everlasting outcasts from the place where his honour dwelleth. It tells us of a great disruption that took place between earth and heaven, and points out the way in which a connexion may again be established between them. That our Christianity should become a matter of home and practical exercise, instead of a matter of distant speculation, or rather, that, beside its doctrinal we may obtain a view of its experimental evi-

dence also, we must look to one side of the disruption as well as the other of it; and if by the eye of conscience we are made to see ourselves, while by the eye of a simple perusal we see the word of Him who hath spoken to us from heaven—then, as by the light of immediate revelation, may we be made to recognise in the adaptation which obtains between unaided nature below, and that doctrine which is offered to our contemplation from above, that we indeed have broken loose from God; but that this is the way in which the old alliance between earth and heaven will again be cemented together. Thus conscience becomes to us as another sense, and we see not by faith, but, as it were, by sight.—IBID.

To be convinced how it is that one may be made to believe in answer to his prayer, and yet that the belief may be rational, and upon evidence—let us only think of the effect were a tenfold power given to the faculty of sight. Then a whole world of novelties that had before escaped all notice, might at once be ushered into observation—new objects altogether, and new appearances and shades of colours in objects that before, in a gross and general way, had been quite familiar to us. New convictions of things would instantly spring up in the person who had thus been visited; and, instead of any lack of evidence, it would be evidence at first hand—strong at least as that of ocular demonstration, and impressing a confidence upon the mind as well warranted as that which we repose in the intimations of our senses. There would, on this supposition, be the revelation of many new facts and new objects; but our belief in their reality would be as distant as possible from a rash or misguided fanaticism. It would be vision with the eye of the body, and not the vagary of a heated imagination at all. Neither would the belief now engendered be the fruit of any new facts or phenomena, now for the first time brought near to him. It would be solely the fruit of a now clearer and more penetrating inspection, cast by the medicated eye upon old objects. It would be the simple result of a look upon pre-existent nature, but of a look more powerful and perspicuous than we had ever been able to cast upon it before. So the

little world of facts and feelings into which a new religious experience introduces us, becomes to us a positive evidence of that to which we were before strangers, and serves for a substantial ground of belief. The same renovation that we have just supposed to take place on the eye of the body, may take place on the eye of consciousness—on that eye whose office it is to look inwardly upon the tablet of the heart, and to take notice of the various characters and lineaments that are thereupon engraven. In virtue of our moral earnestness, and as the fruit of those efforts and those prayers to which this earnestness hath given rise, some film of pride or prejudice that had before obstructed the view of our own character might now be cleared away. We might in consequence be now favoured with a reach of discernment that we never before had among the arcana of our own spirit. We see nothing that was not there before; but we see what to us was invisible before. It is to the pre-existent nature within his breast that he now looks to certain antecedent realities, from which the veil that was formerly upon his heart is now taken away. Let the power of consciousness but be augmented, and there is nought of phantasy whatever in those new truths which now address themselves to the faculty of internal observation. They are not new in point of existence, recognised by the mental eye now purified and made more powerful than before, and to the reality of which, therefore, we may have in every way as good evidence as we have to the reality of our own thoughts.

We have seen a distant land on the other side of a bay or arm of the sea, stretching along the horizon, and too remote for the observation of its scenery. But the power of vision may be strengthened by a telescope; and they are not illusions surely, but stable and antecedent realities, which we are made by the telescope to perceive. Suppose different individuals to have the advantage of this help to their vision,—still, each would behold the same things, and, instead of the phantasmata of an aerial imagination, the eyes of all would rest upon and recognise the very same objects, the actual houses, and spires, and fields, and forests of a landscape that has now for the first time started into sudden, yet

sure and satisfactory revelation. And so those feelings and affections which are experienced by different individuals, and which are the same under the same given circumstances, are not illusions, but are properly described as religious experiences ; and their reality is proved by the numbers of those who have experienced them, just as those who use the telescope can believe in the reality of those objects which formed the landscape.—DR. CHALMERS.

If a person, who has been long in possession of a large estate comes in process of time to have his title disputed, he rummages every corner of his secretaire, and of his strong boxes, to find the original deeds ; which having found, he appeals to as authentic vouchers. Thus past experiences of the grace of God, though not proper to be rested in, may yet be recollected with comfort, and referred to with advantage by a deserted saint, in an hour of doubt and darkness.—SPENCER.

Some small savour of life is diffused abroad among many who are of an honest and good heart ; and from the words themselves only, though ill understood, *those who fear God*, drink in some little sweetness of the breath of life, and some small taste of consolation ; like the faint fragrance which is found in the air that is not far from a bed of roses. This experience is like also unto a simple man passing through a flowery and a sweet smelling meadow, who, though he knows not the peculiar nature and properties of the flowers and herbs, yet finds his senses regaled with the general fragrance.

It would be as foolish to deny the existence of what is called christian experience, as to deny that individuals who are under a process of cure or healing, have any consciousness of the effects which are produced by the medicines that are prescribed to them. So long as the feelings of sickness and health, of bodily ease and pain, differ—so long a person must be conscious of a change in passing from one to the other. The body cannot cast off its exhaustion and disease, and again be clothed with its native energies, and the patient be all the while unconscious of it. Was there no experience of change in Naaman when the leprosy passed

from him, and his flesh became as the flesh of a little child ? Or in the woman who touched the hem of the Saviour's garment, and felt the healing virtue pervading her frame ? Did the jailor at Philippi recognise no change when his ferociousness was exchanged for joy and peace in believing ? Surely in these cases there was certainty serving as a basis for consciousness. In like manner, if the gospel is destined and fitted to act as a remedy, there must be a sensible experience to correspond with it. There must be a consciousness of the effects, if the truth has exerted a searching power on the conscience, a healing influence on the heart, and a transforming operation on the whole character. If it has infused a new principle of life into the soul, giving a new tone and direction to its thoughts and pursuits, and surrounding it by a healthier and holier atmosphere than it ever before breathed, there must be some knowledge of all this. As the process of divine influence advances or retrogrades ; as it experiences checks from within, or counteractions from without ; as there is a vigorous and persevering co-operation on our part with God's revealed purposes and plans, or a state of inactivity or positive resistance, so will the work of salvation be advancing or receding. Now all this makes up what we understand by religious experience, or the christian life.

The faithful preaching of the gospel produces certain effects upon the understanding, the conscience, and the heart of the sinner. Of their existence as phenomena there can be no question ; the fact of the operation of the Holy Spirit of God upon the soul, as a truth, will be also admitted ; and the dispositions or emotions, whether permanent or momentary, are undoubted facts, cognizable as such by testimony, as well as by consciousness. Consciousness, we admit, could not settle the question of their being the work of the Spirit. All that consciousness can do is to recognise them as facts, their origin must be determined by another criterion. Now that other criterion we have, and it is in constant use with believers. And just as in chemistry the nature and origin of any substance may be distinctly pronounced on, when its component parts are subjected to the proper test,

so the nature of these emotions and effects may be ascertain by their proper criterion. The scriptures furnish us with these tests. Here we have the simple admission that there are certain phenomena existing—a certain operation to which these phenomena may or may not be assigned—and a certain test by which that operation may be determined. There is nothing in all this that sound reason can repudiate. Delusions do, and may creep into the church; individuals may, and do profess to be under heavenly influence when they know not what manner of spirit they are of. All this is not denied; but what of this? Does the non-application, or the misapplication, if you please, of a test, do away with the existence and value of a test? Or will you argue against its use from its too frequent abuse?

Christian, bless God for the experiences and sensible taste thou hast at any time of God's love; but know that we cannot judge of our faith, whether weak or strong, by them. Experiences are like crutches, which do indeed help a lame man to go, but they do not make the lame man sound or strong; food and physic must do that. And therefore, Christian, labour to lean more on the promise, and less on *sensible* expressions of God's love, whether it be in the present feeling, or past experiences of it. I would not take you off from improving these, and limit the actings of our faith. A strong man, though he doth not lean on his staff all the way he goes, as the lame man doth on his crutch which bears his whole weight, yet he may make a good use of it now and then to defend himself when set upon by a thief, or a dog, by the way. Thus the strong Christian may make good use of his experiences in some temptations, though he does not lay the weight of his faith upon them, but upon the promise.

Suppose a child to behold a tree covered with the richest foliage, adorned with goodly fruit, and spreading its branches in a summer's sun. Let it be told that all this beauty with which the tree is clothed is but for a little season, and that it will be stript of its foliage, and lose its fruit. The child may form some indistinct conception of your meaning, but the great change which is so soon to take place will be

little realised. But if you bring him to the tree when winter has come and stript its withered branches, he will instantly have a more perfect intelligence of the change, from this single observation, than from all that he had read, or been told of it before. So when religion has in any sincerity been regarded as a rule, it will in the hour of affliction and necessity be resorted to as a support for the heart. And in so applying ourselves to it, more acquaintance with its true influences may be gained in a single day, than in many years conscientiously spent, but not marked by any special trials. Many an obscure page of God's providential dealings with his people will, as with a single glance, be opened to us.

Examination, Self.

In the matter of self-examination this is a soul's encouragement, that it shall not want God's help in this search, if you go about it with honest desires. A justice will not only give a warrant to search a suspicious house, but, if need be, will command others to be aiding to him in this business. Word, ministers, Spirit, all thou shalt have for thy assistance in this work; only have a care thou dost not mock God in it: that soul deserves to be damned for this sin, who in the search for hypocrisy plays the hypocrite; like a naughty, dishonest constable, that willingly overlooks him whom he is searching for, and then says he cannot find him.

Let us be careful to get the true balance to weigh ourselves. There are the scales in which the world weigh men and things, and decide their amount of good or evil. But these, or the like balance, are so appended to the beam as to favour one scale more than the other. They will therefore deceive us in forming our estimate of things. For sin, when put into them, and love for God, and devotedness to him, like two feathers cast into the scale, will weigh so light, that they will kick the beam when the meanest worldly trifle is

weighed against them, while the scale in which the world weigh their virtues, will have a vast preponderance in their favour. There is also the balance of conscience, and this is more false and deceitful (if possible) than the other. The conscience of the natural man is like a fraudulent man with false weights and measures, from whom we shall be sure to have no just weight. We must therefore take the golden balance of the sanctuary. Here, indeed, even our best services, when weighed with the law of God, will be found wanting; but the fulness of the redemption in the blood of Jesus—the freeness of his promises to every repenting sinner—the merit of his sinless obedience,—these, on which the believer builds his hopes, however nicely weighed in the balance of truth, will want nothing of that true weight which the justice of God will demand at our hands.

When the truth of our sincerity requires to be weighed out in drachms and scruples, and runs so sparingly as from an exhausted vessel—when the state of the conscience must be ascertained by a theological barometer, the health of the soul must be in a very feeble and crazy condition.

'Tis related of Sextus, the philosopher, that at the end of the day he thoroughly examined the actions of it. Seneca tells us it was his daily practice to give an account of his actions before the judicatory of conscience. The author of the golden verses gives counsel, in order to proficiency in virtue, to revise in our thoughts at night, "Wherein have I transgressed, what have I done, what have I omitted?" 'Tis prudent advice how to make slothful servants industrious, in the morning to prescribe their work, in the evening to receive an account of what is done or left undone, and to commend or censure, to reward or punish, according to their diligence or neglect. There are rarely found servants of so depraved a temper, so rebellious to authority and reason, so untractable, but they will mend by this managing. Thus let us charge our souls at the beginning of the day with a diligent regard to the duties of it, and at the close require a strict account. If we have had our conversation in godly sincerity, the joy of it will be an oil of gladness to make us more active and cheerful in God's service; but if we have

been slack and remiss, if sins have been easily entertained, and easily excused, the remembrance will imbitter sin, and make us more vigilant for the future.

Election.

Inward holiness, and eternal glory, are the crown with which God adorns and dignifies his elect. But they are not the cause of election. A king is not made a king by the royal robes he wears, and by the crown that encircles his brow ; but he therefore wears his robes, and puts on his crown, because he is a king.

There is much the same difference between election and effectual calling, as between a private manuscript and a printed book. In election, God, as it were, wrote and entered us in his heavenly register ; but it is still kept by him, and none know the contents but himself : whereas, in effectual calling, God, as it were, prints off a sheet of the book of life, and publishes it, and makes it known to the soul, and to the church.

Election having once pitched upon a man, it will find him out, and call him home wherever he be. Zaccheus is called out of accursed Jericho ; Abraham out of idolatrous Uz, of the Chaldeans ; Nicodemus and Paul from the college of the Pharisees, Christ's sworn enemies ; Dionysius and Damaris out of superstitious Athens. In whatsoever dunghills God's jewels are hid, election will both find them out, and fetch them out.—SPENCER.

A man may have his name set down in the Chronicles, yet lost ; wrought in durable marble, yet perish ; set upon a monument equal to a Colossus, yet be ignominious ; inscribed on the hospital gates, yet perish everlastingly ; written in the front of his own house, yet another come to possess it. All these are but writings in the dust, or upon the waters, where the characters perish so soon as they are made ; they no more prove a man happy than the fool

could prove Pontius Pilate to be so, because his name was written in the creed. But the true comfort is this, when a man by assurance can conclude with his own soul that his name is written in those eternal leaves of heaven, in the book of God's election, which shall remain legible to all eternity. Luke x. 20.—IBID.

We may adopt Archbishop Leighton's beautiful illustration of a chain, which he describes as having its first and last link—election and final salvation—up in heaven, in God's own hands; the middle one, which he says is effectual calling, being let down to earth into the hearts of his children; and they laying hold on it have sure hold on the other two, for no power can sever them. Then, the events that lead to that calling, and those that follow it, even to the final consummation and bliss of God's people in heaven, may be so many connected and connecting links, not one of which but bears evidence of the master's hand. How often does Satan exert all the skill of his infernal mechanism to hammer out an additional fetter for his blind and hopeless captive, already fast bound in misery and iron, which is laid hold on by the divine Alchemist, and changed into a golden link in the wondrous chain of providential mercies, destined to form an everlasting song of praise in the month of that ransomed sinner! We can say it of every dispensation towards us, that God has wrought it into a link in that precious chain; and such indeed is the retrospect of bygone days, when thus enlightened by the beams of covenant mercy.

—CHRISTIAN LADY'S MAGAZINE.

Suppose a rope cast down into the sea for the relief of a company of poor shipwrecked men ready to perish, and that the people in the ship, or on the shore, should cry out unto them to lay hold of the rope that they may be saved; were it not unreasonable and foolish curiosity for any of those poor distressed creatures, now at the point of death, to dispute whether did the man that cast the rope intend and purpose to save me, or not, and so, minding, that which helpeth not, neglect the means of safety offered? Thus it is that Christ holdeth forth (as it were) a rope of mercy to poor drowned and lost sinners, and setteth out an open market of heavenly

treasure ; it is our parts, then, without any further dispute, to look upon it as a principle afterwards to be made good, that Christ hath gracious thoughts towards us, but for the present to lay hold on the rope, ply the market, and husband well the grace that is offered. And as the condemned man believeth, first, the king's favour to all humble supplicants, before he believes it to himself ; so the order is, being humbled for sin, to adhere to the goodness of the promise, nor to look to God's intention in a personal way, but to his complacency and tenderness of heart to all repentant sinners, (1 Tim. i. 15,) before he ranks himself in the front of those sinners.

If any man would know whether the sun shineth or not, let him go no further, but look upon the ground and the objects around him, to see the reflection of the sunbeams from thence, and not upon the body of the sun, which will but the more dazzle his sight. The pattern is known by the picture, the cause by the effect ; let no man then soar aloft to know whether he be elected or not, but let him gather the knowledge of his election from the effectualness of his calling, and sanctification of his life spent in obedience to the revealed will of heaven.—SPENCER.

A senator relating to his son the great honour decreed to a number of soldiers whose names were written in a book, the son was importunate to see that book ; the father shows him the outside ; it seemed so glorious, that he desired him to open it. " No, by no means, it was sealed by the council." " Then," says the son, " tell me if my name be there ?" The father replied, " The names are secreted to the senate." " The son studying how he might get some satisfaction, desired him to deliver the merits of those inscribed soldiers. The father relates to him their noble achievements and worthy acts of valour, wherewith they had eternised their names ; " Such are written in," said he, " and none but such must be written in this book." The son consulting with his own heart that he had no such trophies to show, but had spent his time in courting ladies rather than encountering knights, that he was better for a dance than a march, that he knew no drum but the tabret, no courage but to be drunk ; hereupon he

presently retired himself, repented, entered into a combat with his own affections, subdued them, became temperate, continent, valiant, virtuous. When the soldiers came to receive their wreaths, he steps in too, challenges one for himself; being asked upon what title, he answered, "If honours be given to conquerors, I have gotten the noblest conquest of all." "Wherein?"—"These have subdued strange foes, but I have conquered myself." Now, whosoever thou art that desirest to know whose names are written in heaven, who is elected to life eternal, it shall not be told thee, this, or that individual; but generally thus, men so qualified, faithful in Christ, and to Christ, obedient to the truth and for the truth; they have subjected their own affections, and resigned themselves to the guidance of the heavenly will; these men have made noble conquests, and shall have princely crowns: find but in thyself this testimony, and thou art sure of thy election.—IBID.

Envy.

It is said of one Pelaretus a Lacedemonian, that, standing for a place of credit to be one of the three hundred, which was a degree of honour at Sparta, and missing of it, though a man highly deserving, yet he was so far from complaining, or grudging or grieving thereat, that when others marvelled at his contentment, and inquired of his reason, he told them that he rejoiced at the happiness of that commonwealth, that it had three hundred men more worthy to govern than himself. But how many are there in these times of clearer judgment, wherein it is apparently known that true godliness teacheth every man contentment to move in that orb and place where God hath placed him, with that portion which God hath given him; yet, as weak eyes are offended at clear lights, so they fret at the brightness of other men's fortunes, virtues, and prosperity, and envy because of other men's wealth or honour? How many rage

and storm, not that three hundred, nor three, but some one eminent person is preferred before them?—SPENCER.

As an earthquake ariseth from a tumultuous vapour shut up in the caverns and bowels of the earth, where it tosseth and tumbleth until it break out and overturn all that standeth in the way of it; so envy is a pestilent vapour which lieth in the bowels of a man, where it boileth and fretteth until it find occasion to vent itself, and then it tumbleth and throweth down all that standeth in the malicious eye of it. Houses and trees stand firm against a tempest of lightning, or a flood of a rain, and men stand out against the cruelty of sudden wrath and rage of a man's lasting anger; but what house or tree standeth against the force of an earthquake; and who is able to stand before the force of envy?—Prov. xxvii. 4.—IBID.

Example.

It is recorded of one of the most distinguished painters of former days, that when he was a mere boy, after viewing a painting by Raphael for some time with silent transport, he suddenly broke out with joy beaming in his countenance, as if he had found a great treasure, "I too am a painter!" He gave himself to the art, and produced works not unlike that which had kindled in him such enthusiasm. In like manner it may be regarded as a happy sign in ourselves when the spiritual image of an Abraham, an Elijah, or a Paul, transports us with affection, and kindles the ardent wish within us that our hearts were formed like theirs.

Let us compare a good and well-known character of modern times with one of the early days of Christianity—a modern with a primitive Christian. There is a want of strength, a vagueness of character, in the modern, which we do not discern in the ancient. The former is like the modern Greek pictures of saints, which are destitute of the relief afforded by light and shade; while the latter resem-

bles a picture or statue of one of the Italian schools—the one set out in all the strength and variety of harmonious colouring; the other breathing life—a mighty conception of Raphael, or Michael Angelo.

The scriptures present us with a great diversity of characters, where the good and bad elements which form the character of our nature are brought out in bold relief. As the chemist finds out each component element of a mineral by subjecting it to numerous and various tests; so do we detect the principles of the human heart by a similar experience of its condition under novel and diversified circumstances. Our views are narrowed by the examples of daily life, and our standard low. But the breadth of view presented, and the imposing figure which those characters exhibit, being stripped by time of all mean and vulgar detail of daily life, and seen but in their bold outlines, while they sharpen our moral discernment, create also a loftiness of feeling. Such examples are like pictures glowing with sublimity, or like a noble statue instinct with life.

Error.

The cynic answered smartly, who, coming out of a brothel, and asked whether he was not ashamed to be seen coming out of such a naughty house, said, the *shame* was to go in, but *honesty* to come out. O sirs, 'tis bad enough to fall into an error, but worse to persist. The first shows thee to be a weak man, "*humanum est errare*;" but the other makes thee to be like the devil, who is to this day of the same mind he was at his first fall.—SPENCER.

If an ounce weighs down the scale, there is no doubt but that a stone would do it. If the lesser sin presses down to destruction, how can we rationally think that the greater should escape it? Error stands at a farther distance from, yea, a full contrariety to truth, than ignorance. Error is ignorance with a dye upon it. He that eats little or

nothing must needs die, much more he that eats rank poison. The apostle doth not only tell us of "pernicious doctrines," and "damnable heresies," but he tells us they bring swift damnation upon them that hold them.—2 Pet. ii. 1. I pray observe what an accent he lays upon the damnation that comes by these corrupt doctrines; he calls it "swift destruction."

Christ compares the errors of the Pharisees to leaven. Why so? Because of its secret mixture with the wholesome bread. You do not make your bread all of leaven, for then none would eat it; but you mingle it skilfully, and by that means both go down together. Thus our Lord intimates that the Pharisees mix their errors with many truths; and therefore directed them to beware, lest, with the truths, they swallow the errors also.

Faith.

How preferable is the original, durable, and vivifying light of the sun, to the borrowed, evanid, unanimating lustre of the moon! The former, while it illuminates the eye and uncovers the elegant scenes of creation, warms the earth and makes it fruitful, diffuses cheerfulness, and imparts enrichment to no fewer than six primary, and ten secondary worlds. As great is the difference between a cool historical faith that floats in a contemplative head, and the faith of God's elect, which warms, invigorates, and purifies the members of Christ's church. The former is a mere moonlight faith, which, however clear, so far as it goes, yet leaves us as cold and as barren as it found us. The latter, like the solar communications, enlivens and fertilises the soul, filling it with joy and peace through the power of the Holy Ghost; and adorning it with the gems, and flowers, and fruits of grace.

Faith in God's promises may be compared to a bank note; full and felt possession of the blessings promised is like ready cash. The man who has bank-notes to any given value

looks upon himself as possessed of so much money, though, in reality, it is only so much paper. Thus faith is as satisfied, and rests with as great complacency in the promises of Jehovah, as if it had all the blessings of grace and glory in hand. In faith's estimation God's note is current coin.

What can be more feeble than the ivy, the jessamine, or the vine? Yet these, by the assistance of their tendrils or claspers, rise and are supported, until they sometimes mount as high as the tree or the wall that sustains them. So the weak believer laying hold on Jesus by the tendril of faith, rises into the fulness of God, defies the invading storm, and becomes a fruitful vine upon the wall of a house.—SPENCER

Under the blessed Spirit, faith produces holiness, and holiness strengthens faith. Faith, like a fruitful parent, is plentiful in all good works; and good works, like dutiful children, confirm and add to the support of faith.

It may be, thou art a poor, trembling soul; thy faith is weak, and thy assaults from Satan strong, thy corruptions great, and thy strength little; yea, thou art apt to dread that thou shalt one day be cast as a wreck on the shore of the infernal world. And yet, to this day thy grace lives. Thou art still longing, panting, desiring, wishing, and groaning for God. Is it not worth while to turn and see this strange sight? A broken ship, with masts and hull rent and torn, full of leaks, yet towed along by Almighty power, through a tempestuous sea, (nor tempestuous only, but thick set with armadas of sins, afflictions, doubts, and temptations,) safely into God's harbour! To see the poor smoking flax, in the face of the boisterous winds, and liable to the frequent dashes of quenching waves, yet not blown out! In a word, to see a weak stripling in grace held up in God's arms, until all enemies are under his feet! "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes."

It is by faith that we contemplate unseen things. To the eye of a clown a planet appears but a twinkling star; but if he looked through a telescope, and were able to calculate, he would perceive that it was a great world, and would be astonished at its distance and magnitude. While

the gay and busy are moving on their little mole-hills, full of anxiety, faith thus reaches beyond the world; it views death as at hand; it looks at heaven, and catches a glimpse of its glory; it looks at hell, and sees the torments of the condemned; it looks at judgment, and realises that awful day; it looks at eternity, and says, "Our light afflictions, which are but for a moment, work for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen; for the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal.—SPENCER.

Infidelity and faith both look through the same perspective glass, but at contrary ends. Infidelity looks through the wrong end of the glass, and therefore sees these objects which are near afar off, and makes great things little; diminishing the greatest spiritual blessings, and removing far from us threatened evils. Faith looks at the right end, and brings the blessings that are afar off close to our eyes, and multiplies God's mercies, which in distance lost their greatness.

The faith which purifies the heart is an active moving thing in the believer. Stagnant waters are dead; springing waters are wont to be called "living." It is such a faith that carries an agitation with it in a man's soul. So that, whereas it is a fountain agitated by that faith, it will be a self-purifying fountain. Fountains purify themselves: standing waters do not so. This fountain hath a self-purifying power put into it; not as if it hath this of itself, but as the Divine Spirit, moving the fountain by a vital principle put into it, purifies it. What a believer are you? What doth your faith do? Doth it move your heart? Doth it carry your soul with it? Is there a spirit or power of faith working in your faith? Doth it operate? Doth it transform? It is "with the heart man believeth unto righteousness." But when any must say, "My faith lets my heart lie as a dead thing still, as dead as a stone; an impure thing still; is this, indeed, the faith upon which you will venture for eternity? A faith that effects no-

thing, a mere negative faith ; to wit, a faith which only stands in not believing the contrary, or not disbelieving such and such things !

There is the analogy of faith : it is a master-key, which not only opens particular doors, but carries you through the whole house. But an attachment to a rigid system is dangerous. Luther once turned out the Epistle of St. James, because it disturbed his system. I shall preach, perhaps, very usefully upon two opposite texts, while kept apart ; but, if I attempt nicely to reconcile them, it is ten to one if I do not begin to bungle.

There is as real a difference between the strong believer and the weak, or rather, I should say, between the believer who exercises strong faith, and the believer who has but a partial and weak faith, as there is among the armies that fight human battles, between the veriest coward that ever disgraced the standard under which he fought, and the bravest soldier who was the admiration of his friends and foes. For the one who exercises strong faith is ready to fight the strong fight of this world ; on the contrary, the man who is not able to exercise faith in God's promises is scarcely able to hide himself from those foes which surround him : his thoughts are not in achieving victory—his state is not fit for fighting the good fight of faith—he is altogether occupied in resisting those temptations to which his unbelief is daily exposing him.—BAPTIST NOEL.

Believers are citizens of this world, placed here by God to be active in their different spheres ; and there is as real a difference between a man who exercises strong faith, and he who is but weak, as there is between that poor man who is anxious under the apprehension of an approaching bankruptcy, and the liberal benefactor of a province. For the one, he whose faith is weak, is occupied continually with his own evils, with his own unhappiness ; he is constantly perceiving his deficiencies, but grievously failing continually in duty ; feeling a thousand anxieties and alarms ; there is a continual restlessness of spirit : whereas he who exercises strong faith, is ready to diffuse far and wide the blessings he himself enjoys ; he becomes a bless-

ing to others; the promise is dear to him, and heaven seeming within his reach, his own interest secure, that man is able, and that man does, in fact, lay himself out for the good of others; whereas the other is always shrinking within those evils by which he is so beset and harassed.—**IBID.**

Christians are placed in this world in an inclement atmosphere; and there is as real a difference between him who exercises strong faith, and he who is a weak and partial believer, as there is between the hardy and daring mountaineer when he carols in the mountain air, and the poor consumptive sufferer who shivers in the summer breeze. The one is able to shrink from no temptation, he is so languid; he feels that his soul is sick, he feels that he has nothing of the vigour and thriving of a well-ordered soul; whereas the other, who exercises strong faith, is growing more and more powerful, experiencing the promise of God: "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and not be weary; and they shall walk, and not faint."—**IBID.**

There is a grievous error in inquiring whether we have faith, instead of seeking "the obedience of faith." A child called to receive an apple is at no loss to proceed. Yet the grounds on which he acts are not more obvious and apprehensible than are the doctrines of the Gospel, in which we are called to go forth to that heaven which stands with an open gate, and a waving flag of invitation in the perspective before us. The child is exclusively led on by its regard to the object. Still there is another process going on in the recesses of its little bosom, though unconsciously. But it would be quite preposterous to require the child to be quite sure that it had faith in the promise, before it does the plain thing that it is bidden. And it is childish folly to be inquiring whether we have faith, when we should be exclusively directing our attention to the object of promise, and going forwards at the voice of invitation.—**DR. CHALMERS.**

Men may exhort you to the means of faith, but this

you will find, that all those things are as difficult as faith itself: and therefore the apostle, (Rom. x.,) you see, directs you unto faith, as the most easy and short cut of all the rest; you may forecast, saith he, this and that, "But the word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thine heart, that is, that word of faith which we preach."—ver. 8. The apostle speaks first thus, as if one should be brought to a table full of meats, and he that is brought should say, "What is it I should do that I might eat of this meat, and be partaker of it?" Certainly any one would answer, "The meat is here on the table, do thou fall to eating:" so doth the apostle say, the word is nigh thee; it is next door to thy mouth, and to thy heart, and thy lips; do but digest it, (which is the mingling it with faith, as he speaks, Heb. iv.) do but take it in thy thoughts and apprehension, and then it is in thine heart; thou standest now at the threshold, do but step in; enter in, saith he: but will the man say, I must have a stomach to it? Mark what I say—If eating and tasting will be the way to get a stomach, were it not best to fall to? So it is written, "Taste and see how good the Lord is." If there were meat that would get a man a stomach by eating it, assuredly then a man would first fall to eat: now this meat, which is Christ Jesus, doth do so. If coming into the sun would give eyes to a man, and cause the film to fall off as well as give a man light to see himself with, a man that is blind would not stand complaining of his blindness, and say, I will not go abroad, for I cannot see this sun, I will rather stay here in this dark dungeon, in this prison, till the sun force itself through these walls, or come in at some cranny, and so cause the scales to fall off from my eyes. No, certainly, he would go abroad into the air, that so the sun might cure him of his blindness. Jesus Christ is "the Sun of Righteousness, and he hath healing in his wings;" viz. in his beams. Mal. iv. 2. It is an elegant metaphor, comparing these diffusive beams to the spreading of the eagle's wings over her young ones. How doth the iron have virtue to cleave to the loadstone? It is by being brought to the loadstone: so doth the soul get power to cleave unto Christ, by coming to

Christ; and the longer the soul is kept off from exercising faith upon Christ, it is like the iron when kept from the loadstone, grows weaker and weaker.

Get an eye of faith to look through and above the creature. A man will never get to look off from the world till he can look beyond it. St. Peter saith of wicked men, that they are *purblind*, "they cannot see afar off:" they can see nothing but that which is next them; and therefore no marvel if their thoughts cannot reach unto the end of the creature. And nature itself, methinks, may seem to have intended a lesson in the very order of the creatures. Downwards a man's eye hath something immediately to fix on; all is shut up in darkness save the very surface, to note that we should have our desires shut up too from those earthly things which are put under our feet, and hid from our eyes, and buried in their own deformity. All the beauty, and all the fruit of the earth is placed on the very outside of it, to show how short and narrow our affections should be towards it. But upward the eye finds scarce anything to bound it: all is transparent and diaphanous, to note how vast our affections should be towards God; how endless our thoughts and desires of his kingdom; how present to our faith the heavenly things should be, even at a great distance. The apostle saith that "faith is the substance of things hoped for;" that it gives being and present subsistency to things far distant from us; makes those things which, in regard of natural causes, are very remote, in regard of God's promises, to seem hard at hand. And ever, the greater magnitude and light there is in a body, the smaller will the medium or distance seem from it. The reason why a perspective glass draws remote objects close to the eye, is, because it multiplies the 'species.' We then, by faith apprehending an infinite and everlasting glory, must needs conceive anything through which we look upon it to be but short and vanishing. Labour, therefore, to get a distinct view of the height, and length, and breadth, and depth of the unsearchable love of God in Christ; to find in thine own soul the truth of God in his promises, and

that "his word abideth for ever;" and that will make all the glory of other things to seem but grass.

In the gospel's history, we find that Christ had a three-fold entertainment amongst the sons of men; some received him into house, not into heart, as Simon the Pharisee, who gave him no kiss, nor water to wash his feet; some professedly into heart, but not into house, as the graceless swinish Gergesites; some both into house and heart, as Lazarus, Mary, Martha. Thus let every good Christian do, endeavour that Christ may dwell in their hearts by faith, that their bodies may be fit temples of the Holy Spirit, that now in this life, whilst Christ stands at the door of their heart, knocking for admission, they may let him in. For if ever they expect to enter into the gates of the city of God hereafter, they must open their hearts, the gates of their own city, to him here in this world.—SPENCER.

Look how it is with two watermen,—the one hauls his boat about the shore, and cannot get off, but labours and pulls hard, yet never puts her forth to the tide; the other, having more skill, puts off presently, sets up his sail, and then sits still committing himself to wind and tide, which easily carries him whither he is to go. Just thus it is with a faithful soul, and an unbeliever; all the care of one is to put himself upon the care of God's providence, to set up the sail of hope, to take the gale of God's mercy, and so he goes cheerfully. And why? because he is not moved by an external principle; it is faith in Christ Jesus that urges him on, it is by faith that he hath got skill to put over all cares to another; and though he takes up the cross, yet he casts all the cares upon Christ, and then it is an easy matter to lie under the burden when another bears the weight. But the unfaithful, unbelieving soul, thinking by his own will and power to bring things about, labours and pulls hard, yet finds neither ease nor success, but sinks under the pressure of every carnal, worldly occurrence that betides him.—IBID.

Take a cup of wine, and if you would know whether it be good or not, drink it off; but if it warm you not at the heart, quicken you not, nor in any way revive your spirits, you

shall say, It is naught, flat and dead ; had it been good wine, it would have done all this : then if you come to plants, and find no fruits, nor leaves, you say, this plant is dead ; if you take a dram of physic, and it do not work, you say, it is bad physic : and so if you take leaven and put it into dough, if it sour not the lump, you say it is dead leaven. Thus if a man find not faith in the operation thereof, that it works not a general change in the soul, that it fire not the heart with love to Christ, if there be no life in it, then let such a man know, that he is deceived, his faith is not right, not effectual, nor any way conducive to life eternal.—IBID.

Look but on a conduit that is full of water : now a man that would fill his vessel must bring it to the conduit, set it near the cock ; but yet that is not enough ; if that be all, and he do no more, he may go home again with an empty vessel ; and therefore he that would fill his vessel, when he hath brought it to the conduit, and set it under the cock, must also turn the cock, and then the water will run forth and fill the vessel. So Christ is the conduit of all grace and goodness, the fountain of living waters, he that would be spiritually filled must come to him ; his ordinances, the word and sacraments, are the cocks of this conduit. So that a man that would be filled, must not only go to Christ, but to Christ in his ordinances ; and that is not enough either, when he is come to them he must turn them. But how must that be done ? The well is deep, and I have not a bucket to draw ; the cock is hard locked, and I cannot tell how to unlock it, saith the weak believing soul. What of all this ? Thou hast faith, true faith, though a weak faith ; now that faith, actuated and working upon the ordinances, turns the cock, and then the efficacies and virtues of Christ flow forth ; then it is that we are filled with the Holy Ghost, that with joy we draw waters out of the wells of salvation.—Isaiah xii. 3.—IBID.

By faith we receive, we rest on the testimony of God. You may see at a distance an elevated piece of ground, you may be unable to decide whether that elevation was occasioned, was created by artificial means, or by the hand of God ; but when you see the stupendous mountain rising from the

vale, and exhilarating itself in dreadful sublimity, you are at no loss to determine how the mountain was formed, and who laid the foundation. You may see a light at a distance, you may be at a loss to determine whether the light is natural or artificial; but you cannot look to the sun in the heavens, and question whether that sun was created by God, or by man. Now when the heart is purified, when divine truth operates upon the heart, purifying it from the love of sin, and we cease to feel an interest in denying the truth of divine revelation, then we believe the word of God, we have not a doubt upon the subject. Its majesty and sublimity commend it as the work of God! The more pure the mind is, the greater is the certainty we have on this subject; but an impure mind is directly opposed to the faith of the gospel; all is doubt and uncertainty when guilt is lodged upon the conscience.

The difference between walking by faith and walking by sight is wonderful! It is as great as that of our walking in a clear shining morning, when the sky in summer is without a cloud, while the sun sheds his enlivening beams; or our going out in one of our November fogs, when the sky is overcast, and the heavy cloudy atmosphere looks gloom and sadness, and all nature is dreary and cheerless.

The difference between common and true faith may be thus illustrated. Suppose two persons to have been informed that the government had pledged itself to bestow a grant of ten thousand acres of land at the Swan River to any who would settle there, subject to certain conditions as to capital and stock. The announcement is received by both parties, and believed. But the one is not moved to take any steps in consequence of it, the other hastens to fulfil the conditions, and actually goes out to take possession of the land. So the gospel report, and the blessings it is ready to bestow, are believed on, and their truth is not questioned by the nominal professor and the true believer; but the one is not influenced to adopt measures, or comply with the terms it proposes, in order to secure its blessings; but he who has the true faith takes effectual steps, and is careful to fulfil the conditions to obtain its blessings.

Every individual has full warranty to appropriate to himself the overtures addressed to the world. Only let a person announce to a multitude that all who come to him should receive a benefit, or that "whosoever," or any, or "every one" of them that would repair to a certain place should receive a benefit. It is not difficult to divine what will be the first thing in this case, as the effect of any one having believed the announcement. He will betake himself to the appointed place, and his alacrity in going will be just in proportion to his confidence in the honesty of him who made the promise. This may be applied to the faith of the gospel; "eternal life" is held out as "the gift of God through Jesus Christ," and the way is prescribed by which to reach it. Now when the earthly benefactor in our supposed case scattered abroad among the multitude the promise of a certain benefit on their repairing to the appointed place, he did not bid them wait till faith was obtained before they moved. He bade them move, and they by instantly doing so prove that faith existed. These did not seek to ascertain their faith before rendering obedience; by their obedience they ascertained their faith. So there are calls to obedience, and a man obeys them not by feeling inwardly for the faith, but by following outwardly the objects of faith. He must simply do what he is simply bid to do. A plain man is told what to hope for, and where to go for it, and without mysticism he hopes what he is told, and does what he is bid.—DR. CHALMERS.

A Roman writ to Tully, to inform him in something concerning the immortality of the soul; Tully writ back again unto him, "Read but Plato upon the same subject, and you will desire no more." The Roman returned him answer, "I have read it over again and again, but I know not whence it is, when I read it, I assent unto it, but I have no sooner laid the book out of my hand, but I begin to doubt again, whether the soul be immortal, yea or no." So it is with all persuasion from natural principles; as to that extent of doctrine it would persuade us of, the persuasion that ariseth from them is faint and very weak. It is true that nature hath principles to persuade the soul by, to some kind of

assent, as that there is a God, and he must be worshipped. Look upon me, (saith nature,) I have not a spire of grass but tells thee, there is a God; see the variety, greatness, beauty of my work; read a great God in the workmanship of the heavens; a glorious God in a beauteous flower; a wise God in my choice of works; behold a God in the order thou hast seen in me; see him in my law, written in my heart. From these and such like things, *nature* bequeaths a kind of faith to the soul, and learns it to believe that there is a God; but this is far from faith in the point of true believing.—SPENCER.

The “one faith” of St. Paul is, as it were, the watchword of the church, by which we discern friends from foes. A watchword is a military phrase, and when sentinels are placed in their posts the word is given them. Should any one approach, he is challenged for the word; and, if he have it not, he is accounted an enemy. Thus it is in the church militant, the profession of the true faith is the word by which the soldiers of Christ distinguish friends from foes: those who are professedly on the Lord’s side, from those who are against him.—REV. MR. WILLIAN.

True faith is of a working, stirring, lively nature. *Fides pinguescit operibus*, (saith Luther.) Faith is in some sort nourished by a holy life. As the flesh which clothes the frame of man’s body, though it receive its heat from the vitals within, yet conduces to preserve the very life of those vitals; (by a kindly reciprocation of influence;) so works evangelically good, and actions truly gracious, though they have their life from faith, are yet powerful helps to maintain the liveliness of faith. We sometimes see a child nursing the parent that bore him, and therein he performs but his duty.—SPENCER.

The principle which brings man fairly within the reach of religious influence, which gives eternal things their due weight in his practical estimation, which gives them the point and life of waking certainties, and actual existence, is faith. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen;” the confident expectation of the one; the clear, heartfelt, and realising conviction of the other.

Faith is to the truths of Scripture, what the sun is to the face of nature. A stranger who passes through a fine country by night, may be told, and place full confidence in the information, of all the beauties with which he is encircled. But let the day arise, and open to his view smiling valleys and resplendent rivers, the cattle feeding in their pastures, light and shade scattered upon the hills, woods and villages, and glittering spires; then he does not merely hear from others—he knows, and sees, and feels for himself, the paradise which lies around him. So it is with the truths of Scripture. The man who has not faith may, in a certain sense, see and hear, and give them his assent. But still “the veil” is upon his mind. There is a secret virtue in the scripture—a life and spirit in God’s word, which he does not comprehend. For this, its spiritual meaning, he has eyes that see not, ears that hear not, and a heart that will not understand. But let faith once cast the beam out of his eye; let the day-star from above arise; let him who caused the light to shine out of darkness, shine in his heart: and those truths which fell like blunted arrows from his soul, are now “quick and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.” They are not new truths; but they are seen by him with new eyes. They brighten into new light, and seem, as if by enchantment, transfigured into new existence. He believed before, like one asleep, that there is a God. But now the blessed truth bursts, like new day, upon his soul; and seems to fill all nature round him, and all his soul within him, with an all-sustaining, all-cheering, ever-present God!

As a dim dazzling eye, that looked on the brazen serpent in the wilderness, was of more avail to a poor Israelite (then stung with a fiery serpent) than any use that could possibly be made of all his other members; little could the swiftness of his feet, strength of body, nimbleness of his hands, volubility of tongue, quickness of the ear, or anything else have prevailed, had there not been an eye to have looked on it: so without faith we lie “dead in trespasses and sins,” and cannot but perish of the mortal stings which Satan hath blistered us withal; so that had we perfect re-

pentance, sound knowledge, and sincere love, not one of them, nor all of them together, could possibly cure us, if there were not faith to apprehend Christ for our satisfaction, and a propitiation for all our sins. It is only faith in Christ, a true faith, (though a weak dim-sighted faith,) that looking up to the typified serpent Christ Jesus, can cure our wounded, sin-sick souls, and make us here to live unto God, and hereafter in all happiness with him.—SPENCER.

A very tender parent had a son who from his earliest years proved headstrong and dissolute. Conscious of the extent of his demerits, he dreaded and hated his parent. Meanwhile every means were used to disarm him of these suspicions, so unworthy of the tenderness and love which yearned in his father's bosom, and of all the kindness and forbearance which were lavished upon him. Eventually the means appeared to be successful, and confidence, in a great degree, took place of his ungenerous suspicions. Entertained in the family as one who had never trespassed, he now left his home to embark in mercantile affairs, and was assured that if in any extremity he would apply to his parent, he should find his application kindly received. In the course of years it fell out that he was reduced to extremity; but instead of communicating his case to his parent, his base suspicion and disbelief of his tenderness and care again occupied him, and he neglected to apply to him. Who can tell how deeply that father's heart was rent at such depravity of feeling! Yet this is the case of the believer, who, pardoned and accepted and made partaker of a Father's love and covenant promises, when under distress refuses to trust his heavenly and almighty Parent, throws away his filial confidence, and with his old suspicions stands aloof in sullen distrust. O how is God dishonoured by this sinful unbelief!

"Faith is the evidence of things not seen." It represents things future and distant as present and in our actual possession. A superficial fluctuating belief of the good or evil things in the next state is of no force to make us conquerors. All fire has heat, but every fire is not strong enough to melt down gold and silver. 'Tis a firm belief of the heavenly

inheritance, and our sure right in heavenly things, which will cause all the false colours of this world, the shadows in masquerade, to disappear. The evidence and importance of things fixes our resolutions to adhere to them. The son of a king, and the heir of a kingdom, will invincibly assent to the truth of his relation and title. But one who sets up a doubtful title to a crown will have a wavering hope, and be encumbered with the fears of uncertainty. So a sincere believer of the heavenly glory, and his eternal spirit in it, will live joyfully in that faith, and die for it if necessity require; while he who gives but a weak assent to future things, will *follow on* but feebly to *know the Lord*, and push forward his spiritual victories.

It is said of *Eutychus* that, falling down out of a window, was taken up dead, his friends were much troubled at the suddenness of the accident; but St. *Paul* being then preaching in an upper chamber, went down and fell upon him, and embracing him, said, *Trouble not yourselves, for his life is in him*. Though he seemed dead, yet he was alive; and as substance may be said to be in an elm or an oak tree when they have cast their leaves, and there is wine to be found in an unlikely cluster, and one saith, *destroy it not, for there is a blessing in it*—such are the beatings of the pulse, the trances and the swoonings of faith, beating many times so slowly, and drawing the breath of life so inwardly to itself, that no man can perceive any life at all; so that unless the goodness of God should embrace it as St. *Paul* did *Eutychus*, it would never recover strength again. Such was the trance of adultery in David, of idolatry in his son Solomon, of apostasy in Peter, of recusancy in Jonah, &c.—
SPENCER.

How diligent are many Christians in the use of all the ordinances, and yet the natural and promised results do not follow! This is from unbelief. If a man who is fond of improvement should carry a capricious taste with him into all his plans in his edifices, he would build up and pull down, and change squares for oblongs and circles. In his grounds he would plant and root up; in his garden he would sow seeds, and, before they could grow, would destroy the

rising vegetation, to substitute some other crop in its place. Thus unceasing work and bustle would be going on; but where there was so little suffered to be permanent, there would be little improvement. Such is the unprofitable work in which many are engaged in spiritual things: none can deny their diligence in labouring "to build themselves up in their most holy faith." True, they plead the promises and build up much by prayer—but unbelief steps in, and pulls nearly all down; just like one who builds up a wall, and then demolishes it. True, indeed, they sow much seed, and while it is now springing, unbelief comes like a killing frost and cuts it down. While this counter work goes on, nothing can prosper.—IBID.

An unbelieving heart may have some flash of spirit and resolution, but it wants free mettle, and will be sure to jade in a long journey. Faith will throw in the net of prayer again and again, as long as God commands, and the promise encourageth. The greyhound hunts by sight; when he cannot see his game he gives over running: but the true hound by scent, he hunts over hedge and ditch; though he sees not the hare, he pursues all the day long. Thus an unbelieving heart may be drawn out upon some visible probabilities and sensible hopes of a coming mercy to pray and exercise a little faith, but when these are out of sight, his heart fails him; but faith keeps the scent of the promise, and gives not over the chase.

There are doubtless beings in the creation capable of explaining, perceiving, and distinguishing the properties and essence of the different particles of matter by which we are surrounded, and of which, with all the aid of chemistry, and the most advanced philosophy, we know but little. A blind man, who had never enjoyed the opportunity of beholding the sun, might discover, by a nice comparison of the changing temperature of the air, that during certain hours of the day there passed over our earth some great source of heat. The addition of one new sense to us who have already the inestimable advantages which vision affords, might probably in a few hours communicate more instructions, with respect to matter, than all which is ever to repay and consummate the

physical labours of mankind ; giving perhaps to a single glance those slow revelations of nature which one by one, at intervals of many centuries, are to be eventually discovered. Such is the power of faith. It becomes to us like the bestower of another additional sense ; it does not leave us to grope our way in darkness, but lays bare at once to our observation a thousand truths which the most piercing reason would never have discovered, and discloses others, as at a glance, which are but feebly explored after the labour of years.

Family.

St. Augustine, writing to the clergy and townsmen of Hippo, saith, "Although the discipline and government of my house be strict and vigilant, yet as I am a man and live amongst men, I dare not arrogate to myself that my house shall be better than the ark of Noah, the house of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, and of Christ. Thus may it be also with many a good man ; yea, there have been no worse men in the world, than they who have had the best means of grace in christian families ; as in Adam's there was a murdering Cain ; in Abraham's, a persecuting Ishmael ; in Noah's, a scoffing Ham ; in Isaac's, a profane Esau ; in David's, an undutiful Absalom ; in Mephibosheth's, a faithless Ziba ; in Elisha's, a lying Gehazi ; and in the college of Christ, a treacherous Judas : and no wonder, for religion is not hereditary, yea, religion is the work of God, and he hath other ends in means of reformation than conversion, as may be seen in Pharaoh and in Eli's sons.—SPENCER.

The religious man may be considered in his family as the keystone to the arch of a building, which binds and holds all the parts of the edifice together. If this keystone be removed, the fabric will tumble to the ground, and all the parts be separated from each other. Or he is to his family

as the good shepherd under whose protection and care the flock may go in and out and find pasture ; but when the shepherd is smitten, the sheep will be scattered.

The piety of the religious man will survive in the various branches of his family. In the death of Abraham, the aged parent and saint, the precious grain fell fully ripe to the earth, but it was not lost ; it quickened and sprang up again in many a fair and vigorous plant, to adorn and enrich the land. The blessing of Abraham was renewed in Isaac, increased in Jacob, multiplied in the patriarchs, and enlarged abundantly in their offspring, till at last they filled the whole of the promised land. It is like the sowing of good seed, bringing forth a hundred-fold.

Formality.

Rhennus reporteth, that he saw in Mentz, in Germany, two cranes standing, in silver, upon the altar, into the bellies whereof the priests, by a device, put fire and frankincense so artificially, that all the fire and smoke came out of the cranes' beaks. A perfect emblem of the public worship of a dead and formal people ; the minister puts a little fire into them, they have little warmth of themselves, or sense of true zeal ; and as those cranes sent out sweet perfumes at their beaks, having no smell at all thereof in themselves ; so they breathe out the sweet incense of prayer and zealous devotion, whereof they have no sense or spiritual understanding at all.—SPENCER.

Let us conceive the Almighty looking down from his throne upon a multitude of formalists assembled together to worship him avowedly, but not "in spirit and in truth." And what does he behold ? As in religion the heart is everything, so when he perceives the heart is absent from the service which is offered up, the man is absent from his presence. The Omniscient beholds in the place of a sincere offering a piece of solemn formality going through

the attitudes and signs of devotion, and even uttering the affected language of confession, supplication, and praise, but entirely devoid of any corresponding emotions within. He beholds in the rites of such a worship—in means converted into ends—in forms erected into objects of trust—an array of spiritual idols—substituted in his place, and as effectually supplanting him, and robbing him of the homage due unto his name, as if so many crucifixes and carved images were brought out in the midst of the assembly for them to bow down to, and to worship. The idols of the heathen stand between heaven and earth obscuring the vision of God, intercepting and appropriating the mounting incense which should have ascended to the eternal throne. The rites of the formalist are his spiritual idols; instead of leading his thoughts onwards to God, they stand between him and the professed object of his worship, concealing God from his view, engrossing his soul to themselves, and leaving behind them a feeling of satisfaction, simply because they had been revered and observed.—HARRIS.

Forgiveness.

There is mention made of two famous philosophers falling at variance, Aristippus and Æschines. Aristippus comes to Æschines, "Shall we be friends?" "Yes, with all my heart," says Æschines. "Remember," saith Aristippus, "that though I am your elder, yet I sought for peace." "True," says Æschines, "and for this I will always acknowledge you to be the most worthy man; for I began the strife, and you the peace." This was a *pagan glass*, but may very well serve a great many fiery spirited Christians to see their blemishes in. How usual is it for a man to say, I will be revenged upon such a one, he hath done me wrong, I will be even with him; and so he may too. But I'll show him a way how he may be above him. How's that? Forgive

him; for by yielding, pardoning, putting up the wrong, he shows power over his passions, over himself, and that's a far greater thing than to have power over another.—SPENCER.

God withholds often a sense of pardon for wholesome purposes; slender cuts are soon healed up, but deep and dangerous wounds require a longer cure. And in some cases scarifying and lancing, yea, opening of a vein to bleed a while, are most approved of to make an effectual cure.

It was wont to be said of Archbishop Cranmer, if you would be sure to have Cranmer do you a good turn, you must do him some ill one; for, though he loved to do good to all, yet especially he would watch for opportunity to do good to such as had wronged him. O that there were but a few such leading men of such sweet spirits amongst us, how great a blessing of peace might we enjoy! Did we but rejoice in any opportunity of doing good offices of love to those who have wronged us, things would be in a better posture than they are.—SPENCER.

God.

Isaiah, after he had seen the glory of the Lord filling the temple, professed himself willing to go anywhere, and with whatever message the Lord of the temple might commission him to bear. And it is recorded of an eminently holy minister, who lived in the days of persecution, that when an officer of justice, or rather of injustice, came to arrest him at the time when he was about to commence his public worship, he besought that the arrest might be suspended till he had finished the sermon, and then with dignified composure exclaimed, "Now, sir, I am ready." He had seen "the power and glory of God in the sanctuary," and was ready to go to the endurance of imprisonment, and even

of death itself. What is there that the believer, thus situated and thus impressed, is not prepared to encounter, whether in the way of affliction, or in the way of duty? It is when he has looked to his God; it is when a ray of the divine glory has fallen upon his mind, and a beam of divine love has warmed his heart, it is then that, like the great apostle of the gentiles, he can look around with christian composure and triumph upon the troubled scene before him, and say, "None of these things move me," &c.

It is related of Lord Nelson, that at a critical moment a sudden glow of patriotism was kindled within him, and that from that time a radiant orb was suspended in his mind's eye which urged him onwards to renown. But what is this in comparison with the object which fills the eye of the believer's soul, when by faith he beholds the Saviour as the glory of the Lord, and follows on like the Israelites in the path of the fiery cloudy pillar?

If all the stars were to turn back in their courses, if the sun and moon were to suspend their race, how great would be the disorder and confusion which would come! Now this would not equal the dismay which would ensue in the world of spirits if all the stars which Jesus holds in his hand, if all the saints should pause and cease to run their daily course of giving glory to him in whose eyes the sun and stars are but a little thing.

When I find any bodily parts appropriated to the divine nature, I then see God graciously condescends to the weakness of my frail and infirm nature; and bless his holy name that he vouchsafes to reveal himself, not as he is, but as I am. His eye is his wisdom—his right hand, his power—his sitting, his immutability—his standing, his fortitude—his anger, his justice in punishing—his repentance, his mercy in pardoning—his hatred of sin, his holiness—his grieving for sinners, his loving-kindness—his long-suffering, his goodness.

"My people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me, the fountain of living waters, and have hewn out to themselves cisterns, broken cisterns which can hold no water." Well, then, saith the Lord, so long as they have

rested on me, they rested upon a sure supply ; all his mercies are “ sure mercies ;”) upon a fountain which would never fail them : but when once they forsake me, and will not trust their lives in my keeping, but, with the prodigal, will have their portion in their own hands, their water in their own cisterns, their pits prove but to them like Job’s torrent ; deep and plentiful though they seem for a time, yet at length they make those ashamed that relied upon them. There are two excellent things intimated in those two words of *cisterns* and *broken cisterns* : first, the wealth and honour which men get not from the Lord, but by carnal dependences, are but *cisterns* at the best, and in that respect they have an evil quality in them ; they are like dead waters, apt to putrefy and corrupt ; being cut off from the influence of God, the fountain of life, they have no savour nor sweetness in them. Besides, they are *broken cisterns* too ; as they have much mud and rottenness in them, so are they full of chinks, at which whatever is clear and sweet runs away, and nothing but dregs remain behind. The worldly pleasures which men enjoy ; their youthful vigours that carried them with delight and fury to the pursuit of fleshly lusts ; the content which they were wont to take in good fellowship—a storm of sickness, or at farthest a winter of age, blows all away ; and when the fruit is gone, there remains nothing but the diseases of it behind, which their surfeit had begotten, a conscience-worm to torment the soul. Thus the life which we fetch from the cistern is a vanishing life ; there is still, after the use of it, less left behind than there was before ; but the life which we fetch from the fountain, is a fixed, an abiding life, as St. John speaks, or as our Saviour calls it, “ a life that abounds ;” like the pumping of water out of a fountain,—the more it is drawn, the faster it comes.

God is called a rock, to teach us, that, as this continues stedfast and immovable, while the whole surrounding ocean is in a state of perpetual fluctuation ; so, though all the creatures of God, from the lowest to the very highest of the intelligent kind, are subject to change, capable of new additions, with respect to their knowledge, their power, or

their blessedness; God alone is absolutely the same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever!

In explanation of the command to glorify God—it may seem strange and presumptuous, to speak of such poor, sinful, worthless beings as we are, as glorifying, or as capable of glorifying God. But the perfect Christian may be compared to a perfect mirror, which, though dark and opaque of itself, being placed before the sun reflects his whole image, and may be said to increase his glory by increasing and scattering his light. In this view, we may regard heaven, where God is perfectly glorified in his saints, as the firmament, studded with ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands of mirrors, every one of them reflecting a perfect image of God, the sun in the centre, and filling the universe with the blaze of his glory.

God will not only be admired by his saints in glory for his love in their salvation, but for his wisdom in the way to it. The love of God in saving them will be the sweet draught at the marriage feast; and the rare wisdom of God in effecting this, as the curious workmanship with which the cup shall be enamelled.—THE PORTFOLIO.

Look at the sun, how it casts light and heat upon all the world in its general course: how it shineth upon the good and the bad with an equal influence; but let its beams be but centered in a burning-glass, then it sets fire to the object only, and passeth by all others. Thus God in the creation looketh upon all his works with a general love, they pleased him very much. O! but when he is pleased to cast the beams of his love, and cause them to shine upon his elect in Christ, then it is that their affections are inflamed; whereas others are but as it were a little warmed, have a little shining of common grace cast upon them.—SPENCER.

Trees, if the roots run too deep into the earth, must be cut shorter; if the branches spread too far, they must be lopped; and if canker or caterpillar once infest, and cleave to them, then they must be blazed and smoked. Thus, the children of God, when they be too much rooted by their

affections in the things of this world, and with great and large boughs of their ability, wrong and impoverish their poor neighbour, or let their money like the canker eat into their souls—God will give them many a cutting, lopping, and fumigating; and as they cannot but naturally do the one, so God, intending to heal them spiritually, will do the other; his care will be still for them, notwithstanding their several failings.—SPENCER.

Let Jacob but hear that Joseph his son is yet alive, he hath enough. If the king come home with freedom, honour, and safety, Ziba may keep the land, let him take all, Mephibosheth is satisfied. Could but the son of Hamor match with Dina, his circumcision shall be endured, and though the daughters of the country be denied him, yet shall he be well contented. Give but children, and Rachel will not die; and let Simeon see his Saviour, and he will die in peace. Thus let God's children enjoy but him, the subject of their affections, bid life, bid death, come what can come, whatever befalls them, they are contented. He is the object of their supreme love; and he it is, in whom their souls principally delight; wherefore in the enjoyment of him they have all they would have.—IBID.

When God said to Paul that all the souls with him should be safe, there were divers means used; all were not able to swim to the shore, and the ship was not able to bring them all to the shore, but yet by broken boards, and by one means or other, all got to the shore. So the Lord brings things to pass in a strange manner, sometimes by one way, sometimes by another; if one way do not hold, another shall; he breaks in pieces many times the ship that we think should bring us to the shore, but then he casts us on such planks as we little thought on, opens a door for our deliverance that we little dreamt of.

As Joseph, when he spoke roughly to his brethren, and made them believe he would take them for spies, still his heart was toward them, and he was as full of love as ever he could hold; he was fain to go aside and weep. And as Moses' mother, when she put her child into the ark of bulrushes and went a little way from it, yet still her eye was towards it, the babe wept, and the mother wept too; so God

when he goes aside as if he had forsaken his children, yet he is full of sympathy and love towards them ; it is one thing for God to desert, another thing to disinherit : how shall I give thee up, O Ephraim ?—Hos. xi. 8. This is a metaphor of a father going about to disinherit his son, and while he is going to set his hand to the deed, his bowels begin to melt and yearn over him ; though he be a prodigal child, yet he is a child. I will not cut off the entail. God's heart may be full of love when there is a veil upon his face ; the Lord may change his dispensation towards his children, but not his disposition. So the believer may confidently say, I am adopted, and let God do what he will with me ; let him take the rod or the staff, so long as he loves me I will not complain.

Take a straight stick, and put it into the water, then it will seem crooked,—why ? because we look at it through two mediums, air and water ; there lies the deception, thence it is that we cannot discern aright. Thus the proceedings of God, in his justice, which in themselves are straight without the least obliquity, seem unto us crooked : that wicked men should prosper, and good men be afflicted ; that the Israelites should make the bricks, and Egyptians dwell in the houses ; that servants should ride on horseback, and princes go on foot ; these are things that make the best Christians stagger in their judgment. And why, but because they look upon God's proceedings through a double medium of flesh and spirit, that so all things seem to go cross, though indeed they go right enough ; and hence it is that God's proceedings in his justice are not so well discerned, the eyes of man alone being not competent judges thereof.—SPENCER.

The attraction of gravity is proportioned to the quantity of matter which bodies contain ; now as the earth consists of a much greater quantity of matter than any body on its surface, the force of its attraction must necessarily be greater, and must draw everything towards it. So our souls need only be subjected to, and brought within, the influence of the attractions of God, to be drawn to him in preference to any of the creatures around us. His majesty and greatness is more than that of all the creatures ; his wisdom is greater than all created intelligences ;

his power is greater than all ; his goodness and his love exceeds all the sum of love which we have ever witnessed or conceived. When brought within the united influence of these all-powerful attractions, the feeble influence of the creature is lost and overcome ; and, as under the attraction of gravity, the heart is irresistibly drawn to God.

The character of God is but little seen but from Revelation. Redemption, that is the glass which reflects its true beauty. Look at the light of day ; it presents one uniform, and undistinguished, and unbroken mass of light. The many beautiful rays and colours which united together to form that light are lost and hid from our eyes. It is science only that has discovered to us this fact. But when we take the prism, and cause this apparently simple and uncompounded light to pass through its sides, we are charmed with the beauty of its rays, the richness and variety of its colours. So when we turn away from the glass which redemption holds up, how many of the attributes of God are hid from us ! That it is which (as the prism separates and untwists the rays of light) brings to light the hidden glories of the Godhead. There it is his justice and mercy, his holiness, and purity, and love, beam, and like rays of light pour their effulgence on our astonished sight ; and the Almighty shines forth in all the glory and beauty of these attributes now manifested and revealed to his creation.

Conceive the case of one, who, after beholding with admiration and delight star after star pass the aperture of an ordinary telescope, should then be enabled to look with telescopic sight upon the whole expanded heavens. So it is with the believer, who, after many a sweet and hasty glimpse of divine love, has the Spirit sent to take more fully of "the things of Christ," and reveal unto his soul the glory of God in Christ.

It is with the Christian as with some merchant's agent that keeps his master's cash ; he tells his master he has a great sum of his by him, and desires he would discharge him of it, and see how his accounts stand ; but he can never find him at leisure. There is a great treasure of

mercy always in the Christian's hand ; and conscience is oft calling the Christian to take the account, and see what God has done for him, but seldom it is that he can find time to tell his mercies over. And is it any wonder that such should go behind in their spiritual estate, who take no more notice what the gracious dealings of God are with them ? How can he be thankful who seldom thinks of what he receives ? or patient when God afflicts, that wants one of the most powerful arguments to pacify a mutinous spirit in trouble ; and that is taken from the *abundant* good we receive from the Lord and the *little* evil ? How can such a soul flame with love to God, that is kept at such a distance from the mercies of God, which are fuel to it ? And the like may be said of all the other graces.

In order to secure a machine (a clock) whose movements are sufficiently accurate to measure time, there must be a moving power, that is, weights, and also the directing force, a pendulum. So that we may move without deviation in that precise orbit in which God would have us, two properties are indispensable, right inclination and wise direction. Right inclination, be it ever so decided, is but the pondus, the weights of the moral machine. In order to regular movement a pendulum must be added ; and what is this but a judgment enlightened by the Spirit to know the perfect will of God ? We must not only serve him in *spirit*, but in *truth*. Here we have exactly the weights, and the pendulum ; spirit, or right inclination, the former ; right or wise direction, the latter.

If we had eyes adapted to the sight, we should see, on looking into the smallest seed, the future flower or shrub, or tree, enclosed in it. God will look into our feelings and motives as into seeds ; by those embryos of action he will infallibly determine what we are, and will show what we should have been, had there been scope and stage for their developement and maturity. Nothing will be made light of. The very dust of the balances shall be taken into account. It is in the moral world, as it is in the natural, where every substance weighs something ; though we speak of imponderable bodies, yet nature knows nothing of positive *levity* :

and were men possessed of the necessary scales, the requisite instrument, we should find the same holds true in the moral world. Nothing is insignificant on which sin has breathed the breath of hell: everything is important in which holiness has impressed itself in the faintest characters. And accordingly "there is nothing covered that shall not be revealed; and hid that shall not be known." However unimportant now, in the estimation of man, yet, when placed in the light of the divine countenance, like the atom in the sun's rays, it shall be found deserving attention; and as the minutest molecule of matter contains all the primordial elements of a world, so the least atom of that mind shall be found to include in it the essential elements of heaven.—

HARRIS.

The sunbeams, though unspeakably beneficent in their distributive capacity, yet, if collected to a point, would be ruinous in their operation. The power of God considered as exerted in, and for his believing people, becomes a gracious medium of their present and eternal felicity. But that same adorable attribute, when set in array against reprobate angels and men, burns as a fire which none can quench. "Who knoweth the power of thy wrath?" And oh! how irresistibly will that power be made manifest, when "the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that believe not the gospel."

Not a single moon, or secondary orb, accompanies Mercury in his progress. He pursues his solitary journey without a servant, without a companion. Yet, nowise discouraged by this circumstance, he cheerfully speeds his rapid course, and rather flies than rolls round the vivifying centre of light and heat. The sun is to him instead of every other friend; and more than supplies the absence of a thousand attendants. Providence may, perhaps, cast your lot, O Christian, in a place, or fix you in a family, where you may not find any with whom you can "take sweet counsel, and walk to the house of God as brethren." Be not, however, disheartened, neither dejectedly ask, "Who will show me any good?" but make the psalmist's prayer

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your own ; “ Lord, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon me ! ” If you experience continual nearness to God, through the Spirit, and are, as Mercury, *in sole positus*, irradiated and warmed by direct communion with Christ, no matter whether you travel to heaven in company or alone. In the best sense of the word, you are sure of not being alone ; for all the persons in the Godhead, and angels who minister to the heirs of salvation, are your companions and guardians, your guides and familiar friends.

Though the earth is crowded with proofs of the divine beneficence, yet the worldly man sees but a glimpse of it ; he is as one standing only upon the threshold of the temple which records God’s goodness. But the true believer is one who has entered its sacred walls, and mingled with its worshippers. The great display, “ the unspeakable gift,” remains *within*. While its walls are filled with testimonies of goodness infinite, on the altar of sacrifice he sees inscribed, “ God so loved the world that he gave his only begotten Son.” Now he can exclaim, “ Herein his love ! ” It is he that can say, “ Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift.”

The eye is qualified to receive delightful impressions from the objects of creation seen in reflected light. But there is a point at which the eye fails—the direct approach to the meridian sun. So it is with reason, the moral eye of man. It is qualified to examine the creation around us, and to draw arguments from observations on creatures ; but when it approaches God it fails, and must veil itself before the incomprehensible splendour of that bright luminary. When any process takes place upon the organs of the natural eye, enabling it to delight in a direct look at the sun, such process resembles true spiritual conversion, and then the individual is enabled to gaze on the eternal source of light and love, even God himself.

God is said to harden the heart when he withholds restraining grace—to harden when he does not soften. He is said to make blind when he does not enlighten, as freezing and darkness follow upon the absence of the sun, the source of light and heat.

None can seek God acceptably but when he takes Christ with him. As the history has recorded of Themistocles, when he sought the favour of the king, he snatched up the king's son, and so came and mediated for his grace and favour; so, let us take the Son of God in the arms of our faith, and present him to God the Father, and seek his face, his strength.

Man is the God of the dog. He knows no other, he can understand no other; and see how he worships him! With what reverence he crouches at his feet, with what love he fawns on him, with what dependence he looks up to him, and with cheerful alacrity obeys him! His whole soul is wrapped up in *his* God; all the powers and faculties of his nature are devoted to his service; and these powers and faculties are ennobled by the intercourse, and are made such as, without the confidence of a better nature than his own, he could never attain. So would it be with man, did he thus adore, reverence, and look up to his God. Thus resting, and assuring himself upon the divine protection and favour, he gathers a force and faith which human nature in itself could not obtain. Thus adoring him, and absorbed in his will, his nature exalts itself above its human frailty. It ought to be so with the Christian, *but the dog puts the Christian to shame.*

It is related in Roman history, when the people of Collatia stipulated about their surrender to the authority and protection of Rome, the question asked was, "Do you deliver up yourselves, the Collatine people, your city, your fields, your water, your bounds, your temples, your utensils, all things that are yours, both human and divine, into the hands of the people of Rome?" And on their replying, "We deliver up all," they were received. The voluntary surrender which you, Christian, have made to Christ, is equally comprehensive; it embraces all you are, and have, and hope for.

Moral uprightness falls short of the chief end, indispensable to make a person upright indeed. This is the glory of God—1 Cor. x. 31—"Whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory

of God." The archer may lose his game as well by shooting short as shooting wide. The gross hypocrite shoots wide, the upright moralist shoots short. He may, and oft doth, take his aim right, as to the immediate and particular end of his action, but ever fails in regard of the ultimate end. Thus a servant may be faithful to his master, scorn to wrong him of a farthing, yea, cordially seek his master's profit, and yet God be never looked at, nor thought of in all this : so all is worth nothing, because God is left out, who is principally to be regarded. Eph. vi. 7. Servants are commanded to do their service as to God, not to man ; that is, not only, not chiefly, to man.

"Thy commandments are exceeding broad." Great ships cannot sail in narrow rivers and shallow waters ; neither can minds, truly great with the knowledge of God and heaven, find room in the creature to turn and expatiate themselves in. A gracious soul is soon aground, and at a stand when upon these flats ; but let it launch out into the meditation of God, his word, the mysterious truths of the gospel—and he finds *a place of broad waters*, sea room enough to lose himself in.

An artist delights in his own work, and would not leave one single flaw or defect in it designedly. Phil. i. 6. O then look upon me, thou wise Creator. Knowing thou canst do not less than a human artist, remove these impediments which discredit thy work. Thou canst bring out of darkness light, and I believe thy work shall be finished at last, and glorify the name of its maker. 1 Pet. v. 10.

God, as revealed in the economy of redemption, was the grand centre of all the feelings, principles, and exercises of Baxter. It was to him at once an attractive as well as a repelling power ; drawing him to holiness and happiness ; and repelling everything that was mean and unworthy from his character, as well as what was more directly evil.

The attraction of bodies diminishes with their distance from each other ; so while we continue in our unregenerate state "afar off" from God, there will be no attrac-

tion of the heart to God; it is only when we are made "nigh in Christ" that, the distance being removed, we are capable of feeling his attracting love.

Land-floods make a great noise, swell high, but are suddenly in again, whereas the spring or well-head continueth full without augmentation or diminution. Such are the things of the world, such are all creature helps; how do they flourish for a while! but are soon gone. But God is the well-head never to be drawn dry, the eternal spring that feeds all other streams; in him, and in him only, are the rivers of pleasure for evermore.—SPENCER.

The scribe is more properly said to write than the pen; and he that maketh and keepeth the clock is more properly said to make it go and strike, than the wheels and pegs that hang upon it; and every workman to effect his work, rather than the tools which he useth as his instruments. So the Lord, who is the chief agent and mover in all actions, may more fitly and properly be said to effect and bring to pass all things which are done in the earth, than any inferior or subordinate causes, as meat to nourish us, clothes to keep us warm, the sun to lighten us, friends to provide for us, &c., seeing they are all but his tools and instruments, but as they are ruled and guided by the power and providence of so heavenly a workman.—IBID.

The case of Monica, the mother of St. Augustine, is famous. She grieved that her son was spotted with the heresy of the Manichees, and she prayed and prayed still; yet he, as himself confesseth, continued for nine years together so infected. It fell out afterwards, that he would needs go and travel out of Africa into Italy; his mother being loath to part with him, being the staff of her age, earnestly prayed that God would hinder him of that purpose. St. Augustine went, and coming with itching ears, got his heart touched, and religion into boot, with the eloquence of St. Ambrose at Milan; whereupon not long after he broke out into this confession, "Thou, O God, deep in counsel, and hearing the substance of my mother's desires, didst not regard what she then asked, that in me thou mightest do that which she ever asked." Thus the

Almighty dealeth with other of his servants, working all things for the best; but it is at such times as he himself thinketh best for our friends and children; the Lord knoweth better what is good than we ourselves can desire, yet we must pray and beg with this condition, Thy will be done: that which we think is most dangerous turneth oftentimes to our good, and then, when we expect our undoing, God raiseth our greatest comfort; and when it is our greatest extremity, then is his best opportunity; if it be in him to bless and protect us, it is in him to do it when it seemeth good to himself.—IBID.

A merchant that keeps a book of debtor and creditor, writes both what is owing him and what he oweth himself, and then casteth up the whole: but God doth not so; his mercy is triumphant over his justice, and therefore he wipes out what we owe him, and writes down that only which he owes us, by promise. Much like the clouds that receive ill vapours from us, yet return them again to us in sweet refreshing showers; the very consideration of this may be as a full gale of wind to our sails to put us on to load God's chronicle with thankfulness, writing upon ourselves, by a real profession of his service, as Aaron did, "Holiness to the Lord." Surely our judgment is with the Lord, and our work with our God. Isa. xlix. 4.—IBID.

It is observable, that the Roman magistrates, when they gave sentence upon any one to be scourged, a bundle of rods, tied hard with many knots, was laid before them; the reason was this, that whilst the beadle or flagelliser was untying the knots, which he was to do by order, and not in any other hasty or sudden way, the magistrate might see the deportment and carriage of the delinquent, whether he was sorry for his fault, and showed any hope of amendment, that then he might recal his sentence, or mitigate his punishment; otherwise to be corrected so much the more severely. Thus God, in the punishment of sinners, how patient is he! how loath to strike! how slow to anger! if there were but any hopes of recovery, how many knots doth he untie! how many rubs doth he make in his way to justice! He doth not try us by martial law, but pleads the case with us; "Why

will ye die, O house of Israel?" and all this to see whether the poor sinner will throw himself down at his feet, whether he will come in, and make his composition, and be saved.—IBID.

Æschines, perceiving every one give Socrates something for a present, said unto him, "Because I have nothing else to give, I will give thee myself." "Do so," saith Socrates, "and I will give thee back again to thyself, better than when I received thee." So says God, If thou wilt give thyself to me in thy prayers, in thy praises, in thy affections, and in all thy actions, I will give thyself back so much mended, that thou shalt receive thyself and me too; thyself in a holy liberty to walk in the world in a calling; myself, in giving a blessing upon all the works of thy calling, and imprinting in thee a holy desire to do all things to my glory.—IBID.

Anaxarchus the philosopher, being asked to what end he was born, replied, "To contemplate the sun, moon, and skies." And if the multitude of those around us were asked the same question, if they were to answer according to the tenor of their lives, they must reply, "We were born to love and regard the things of time and sense, and make our souls the drudge and slave of our bodies." But all who are taught of God would answer, "I was born to glorify God, and to be glorified by him."—IBID.

Modern astronomers have discovered what are commonly called *maculæ solares*: i. e. certain spots which hover near the surface of the sun. Sometimes a considerable number of these are visible at once, and very often none at all. Philosophers are greatly divided as to the nature and cause of these solar spots: though it is generally agreed that they are not adherent to the sun's disc, but suspended at some distance from it; and there is reasonable ground to believe that, after a temporary suspension, they fall into the body of that grand luminary, and are instantaneously transmuted into one splendid mass with itself. Whether those reputed spots be really in the sun or not, thus much is infallibly certain, that "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all;" no error, no impurity, no defect. The afflictive distributions of

his providence, and the limited communications of his grace, may, to the benighted eye of unregenerated reason, appear like the transitory spots which sometimes seem to disfigure the beauty, and to impair the lustre of the sun. "I am afflicted beyond measure, and without cause," cries a child of unbelief, while smarting under a providential rod. "God is partial and unjust, in converting some to holiness, and leaving others to perish in their sins," says the unhumbled and proud-hearted. On the contrary, the faith of God's elect teaches its happy subjects to give their heavenly Father unlimited credit for being perfectly wise, and just, and good ; and to wait the end of his dispensations, when every seeming spot shall vanish, and God will make his righteousness as evident as the light, and his just dealing as the noon-day.

In common conversation, we frequently speak of solar eclipses. But what is called an eclipse of the sun is, in fact, an eclipse of the earth, occasioned by the moon's interference or transit between the sun and us. This circumstance makes no alteration in the sun itself, but only intercepts our view of it for a time. From whence does darkness of soul, even darkness that may be felt, usually originate? Never from any changeableness in our covenant God, the glory of whose unvarying faithfulness and love shines the same, and can suffer no eclipse. It is when the world, with its fascinating honours, or wealth, or pleasures, gets between our Lord and us, that the light of his countenance is obstructed, and our rejoicing in him suffers a temporary eclipse.

The sun possesses, in a very supereminent degree, the two contrary powers of attraction and repulsion. By the former, the circuiting planets are retained, each in its proper orbit ; by the latter, they are prohibited from approaching him too nearly : a faint emblem of God's paternal attributes on one hand, and of his terrific perfections on the other. Those encourage us to draw nigh to him, as the everlasting love of our souls ; these restrain us from presumptuous familiarities, and from taking undue liberties with him who is "glorious in holiness, fearful in praises," and whose greatness knows no limit.

Hast thou seen the rainbow in the blue sky, when the

bright sun shineth without a cloud in the summer's heaven? Hast thou seen it in the driving tempest, when the whole horizon gathered blackness? No; but when the cloud of rain was in the sky, and the sun looked upon it from the other side of heaven, then did the falling drops receive the slanting beams, and untwisting their seven colours, return them to the eye of the beholder, a beautiful bow, "a faithful witness," the truth of God. And thus it is not chiefly in the bright season of worldly comfort that the faithful witness of God is seen and felt; nor is it always in the season of affliction; for affliction may be unsanctified. But when the Sun of Righteousness sendeth forth his bright beams into the cloud of tribulation, then is the faithfulness of God perceived, then is his love felt, then are his promises enjoyed, then "we glory in tribulations also, knowing that tribulation worketh patience," &c.

Suppose a man should come into a curious artificer's shop, and there with one blow dash in pieces such a piece of art as had cost many years' study and pains in the contriving thereof, how could he bear with it? How would he take on to see the workmanship of his hands so rashly, so wilfully destroyed? He could not but take it ill, and be much troubled thereat. Thus it is, that as soon as God had set up and perfected the frame of the world, sin gave a blow at all; it unpinned the frame, and had like to have pulled all in pieces again. Nay, had it not been for the promise of Christ, all this goodly frame had been reduced to its primitive nothing again; man by his sin had pulled down all about his ears; but God in mercy keeps it up: man by his sin provokes God; but God in mercy passeth by all affronts whatsoever. O the wonderful mercy, the omnipotent patience of God!

A man cannot behold the sun in the eclipse, it so dazzleth his eyes; but he may see the image of the sun reflected in the water; so seeing we cannot behold the infinite God, nor comprehend him, we must therefore cast the eyes of our faith upon his image, Christ Jesus. When we look into a clear glass, it casteth no shadow to us; but put steel upon the back, then it casteth a reflex, and sheweth the face in the

glass ; so when we cannot see God himself, we must take the manhood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and there we shall have a comfortable reflex of his glory.—SPENCER.

When the king removes, the court and all the carriages follow after ; and when they are gone, the hangings are taken down, nothing is left behind but bare walls, dust, and rubbish. So, if God removes from a man or a nation, where he kept his court, his graces will not stay behind ; and if they be gone,—farewell peace, farewell comforts, down go the hangings of all prosperity, nothing is left behind but confusion and disorder.—IBID.

The sun doth manifest itself first by daylight, and that is common to all that dwell in the same horizon unto which the sun is risen: some have more than daylight, they have also the sun shining light, which shining light of the sun is not in all places where daylight is. Finally, the sun is manifested in the heavens in his full strength, for the body is present there, which none can endure but the planets, which become glorious bodies, by that special presence of the sun amongst them. In like manner God, in whom all things live and move and have their being, doth manifest himself unto some by the works of his general providence, of which St. Paul speaks, "God left not himself without witness," &c. This manifestation of God is like the daylight, it is common to all, it is an universal grace : "the eyes of all things look up unto thee," &c. There is a second manifestation, and that is more particular, but to some only ; it is like the sunshine, it is that manifestation which God vouchsafeth to his church, of which Isaiah speaketh, "Arise, shine, for thy light is come," &c. In comparison of the church, the rest of the world sitteth in darkness, and in the shadow of death. The third and last manifestation,—is that which God maketh of himself in heaven to the angels and saints, the clearest and fullest whereof a creature is capable ; and those which partake of the presence of God, become thereby glorious saints, more glorious than the stars which receive their resplendent lustre from the aspect which they have to the sun's body. So that it seems there are those which are in better case than we are, and there are those in worse ; therefore we must

thank God for our present advancement, and remember that we make forward unto that nearness unto God which is reserved for us in the heavens.

In the extremity of any of the Lord's people, when the conspiring enemies are great in number and power, faith raises the drooping spirits by applying the word,—“If God be for us, who can be against us?” When Antigonus was ready to engage in a sea-fight with Ptolemy's armada, and the pilot cried out, *How many more are they than we!* the courageous king replied, *'Tis true if you count their numbers, but for how many do you value me?* One God is sufficient against all the combined forces of earth and hell. We are therefore commanded to cast all our care on him, for he careth for us.—SPENCER.

In spiritual desertion God will show us his sovereignty, and that he will be free to go and come at his own pleasure. A mariner has no cause to murmur and quarrel with God because the wind bloweth out of the east, when he desires a westerly gale. Why?—because it is *his* wind, and he will dispose these things according to his pleasure. So the comforts and outshining of his love are his, and he will take them, and give them as he sees good.—IBID.

As the potter's clay, when the potter hath spent some time and pains in tempering and forming it upon the wheel, and now the vessel is even almost brought to its shape, a man that stands by may with the least push put it clean out of shape, and mar all on a sudden that he hath been so long a making; so it is that all the plots and contrivances of wicked men, all their turnings of things upside down, shall be but as the potter's clay; for when they think they have brought all to maturity, ripeness, and perfection, when they look upon their business as good as done, on a sudden all their labour is lost, and God, that stands by all the while and looks on, will with one small touch, with the least breath of his mouth, blast and break all in pieces.—IBID.

In heaven our union with God is more near and noble, more intimate and influential, more inseparable and eternal, than we can now conceive. 'Tis observable in natural causalities, that what is of a more pure and refined nature is

more active and penetrating, and more closely unites with other things, than what is more gross and material. Light, which is the purest quality in the world, actuates all colours, and makes them visible, and actuates the eye, and conveys the lively image of the object with shining evidence into it. The sun shoots its invisible virtue into the deepest mines. Fire is more pure and subtle than water, and will pierce into solid metals, which the water cannot soak into. The glowing iron seems to be all fire. Now God is the purest spirit, and of infinite energy, and can unite himself to our spirits more intimately than the closest union between any creatures in the world. He unites himself to the understanding by an immediate radiation and discovery of his glorious excellencies. *In thy light*, saith the psalmist, *we shall see light*. He unites himself to the will, by the infusion of his love, and by that draws forth our love to him. This union is complete in heaven, and most communicative of the divine influences to the saints; and consequently their conformity and fruition of God is in the highest degrees that created spirits are capable of.

When the will fixes upon the creature as its end, it is in a strait, in a house of bondage. Take the world in its own place, 'tis a spacious looking-glass of God's power and goodness; but take it as a man's end and happiness, 'tis too strait and narrow a place for the immortal spirit to breathe in. Thence carnal men, even in the fulness of sufficiency, are in straits.—Job. xx. But when the will fixes itself upon God as its end, 'tis free indeed. The Rabbins call God PLACE—and a large one he is—no less than an infinity and immensity of goodness—such as no desire or outgoing of the will can ever pass through. Here is room enough for an immortal spirit—Goodness enough to satiate the rational appetite for ever.

God is Being itself. Being in the abstract, and all other beings are like so many lamps kindled around the temple of the universe, and all lighted and continued burning by him.

A mariner in a storm would very fain save his goods; but to save the ship, he heaves them overboard. A tender-

hearted mother corrects her child, whereas the stripes are deeper in her heart than in its flesh. As it was said by a judge, that being to give sentence of death upon an offender, "I do that good which I would not :—" thus God, more loving than the careful mariner, more tender than the indulgent mother, and more merciful than the pitiful judge, is willingly unwilling that any sinner should die. He punisheth no man as he is a man, but as he is a sinful man. He loves him, yet turns him over to justice. It is God's work to punish, but it is withal his "strange work ;" his strange and foreign act, not his good will and pleasure, his nature and property being to have mercy on all men.—SPENCER.

It is said of vapours, that arising out of the earth, the heavens return them again in pure water, much clearer and more refined than they received them ; or, as it is said of the earth, that receiving the sea-water and turbid river-water, it gives it better than it received it in the springs and fountains ; for it strains the water and purifies it, that whereas when it came into the bowels of the earth it was muddy, salt, and brackish, it returns pure, clear, and fresh, as out of the well-head waters are well known to come. Thus, if men would but give up their heart's desire, and the strength of their affections unto God, he would not only give them back again, but withal much better than when he received them ; their affections should be more pure, their thoughts and all the faculties of soul and body should be renewed, cleansed, and beautified, and put into a far better condition than formerly they were.—IBID.

While Dr. Doddridge was at Bath, in his way to Falmouth, from which latter place he was to embark, and did embark, for Lisbon, Lady Huntingdon's house at Bath was his home. In the morning of the day on which he set out for Falmouth, Lady Huntingdon came into the room and found him weeping over that passage in the prophet Daniel, chap. x. 11, 12, "O Daniel, a man greatly beloved," &c. "You are in tears, doctor," said Lady H. "I am weeping, madam, (answered the good doctor,) but they are tears of comfort and joy. I can give up my country, my relations, and friends, into the hands of God. And as to myself, I can as

well go to heaven from Lisbon as from my own study at Northampton."

Mercury being very considerably nigher the sun than we, the disk of that illustrious object, viewed by Mercurian spectators, appears (as is computed) seven times larger than it does to us. Thus, the nearer we spiritually dwell to God, the more glorious does Christ, both as a divine person and a mediator, shine to the eye of faith. They who unhappily entertain low and degrading ideas of Jesus, give but too low and infallible demonstration, that they themselves are far, extremely far, removed from the light of Jehovah's truth, and from the warmth of Jehovah's grace.

In the reign of King Edward the First there was much abuse in the traffic of all sorts of drapery, much wrong done betwixt man and man by reason of the diversity of their measures, every man measuring his cloth by his own yard; which the king perceiving, being a goodly proper man, took a long stick in his hand, and having taken the length of his own arm, made proclamation through the kingdom, that ever after the length of that stick should be the measure to measure by, and no other. Thus God's justice is nothing else but a conformity to his being, the pleasure of his will; so that the counsel of his will is the standard of his justice, whereunto all men should regulate themselves as well in commutative as distributive justice, and so much the more righteous than his neighbour shall every man appear, by how much he is proximate in this rule, and less righteous as he is the more remote.—SPENCER.

The gardener digs up his garden, pulls up his fences, takes up his plants, and to the eye seems to make a pleasant place as a waste piece of ground; but every intelligent man knows that he is about to mend it, not to mar it; to plant it better, not to destroy it. So God, even in our spiritual desertions, though he seem to annihilate, or to reduce his new creation, yet it is to repair its ruin, and make it more beautiful and glorious; or, as in the repairing of a house we see how they pull down part after part, as if they intended to demolish it quite, but the end is to make it better; it may be some props and pillars are removed, but it is to

put it stronger ; it may be some lights are stopped up, but it is to make it fairer. So, though God take away our props, it is not that we may fall, but that he may settle us in greater strength ; he batters down the life of sense, to put us upon a life of grace : and when he darkens our light that we cannot see, it is but to bring in fuller light into our souls ; as when the stars shine not, the sun appears rejoicing our eyes for the loss of an obscure light with his clear bright shining beams. So that though God do forsake his people, yet not totally, not for ever, not ceasing the affection of love for any time : and when they seem to be turning more into a desolate and ruinous condition, yet even then is he building and preparing him to be a more excellent structure.—IBID.

That workman should do ill, who, having built a house with another man's purse, should go about to set up his own name upon the front thereof ; and in Justinian's law it was decreed, that no workman should set up his name within the body of that building which he made out of another's cost. Thus Christ sets us all at work ; it is he that bids us to fast, and pray, and hear, and give alms, &c. ; but who is at the cost of all this ? whose are all these good works ? Surely God's. Man's poverty is so great, that he cannot reach a good thought, much less a good deed ; all the materials are from God, the building is his ; it is he that paid for it. Give but, therefore, the glory and the honour thereof unto God, and take all the profit to thyself.—IBID.

Gospel.

The gospel runs in two golden streams—freedom of sin, and purity of walking : they run undividedly all along, in one channel, yet without confusion one with another, as it is reported of some great rivers that run together between the same banks, and yet retain distinct colours and natures all the

way, till they part. But these "streams that glad the city of God" never part from one another; the cleansing blood and the purifying light, these are the entire and perfect sum of the gospel; purification from sin, the guilt of sin, and the purity of walking in the light, flowing from that, make up the full complexion of Christianity, which are so nearly conjoined together, that if they be divided they cease to be, and cannot any of them subsist, save in man's deluded imagination.—THE PORTFOLIO.

The gospel pours contempt upon the head of the world and all the glory of it; it throws down all the mountains of earthly honour, riches, pleasures, wisdom, and of whatsoever is called great under heaven, and fills up the valleys with them, and makes all but a level or plain. It takes away all difference between "Jew and Grecian," between "bond and free," between "male and female;" and so between rich and poor, honourable and despised, &c. making all to be but "one in Christ Jesus." The meaning is, that it invests all those, without exception, who receive and subject themselves unto it, in an estate or condition so superabundantly glorious and blessed, that nothing any ways relating, or appertaining to their present condition in the world, whether convenience or inconvenience, privilege or disprivilege, honour or dishonour, riches or poverty, strength or weakness, health or sickness, is any ways considerable, or much to be regarded, in comparison thereof. It is only in the time of the night when "one star differeth from another in glory." When the sun ariseth in his might, he presently dissolveth all these distinctions of first and second, of fifth and sixth magnitudes between them, swallowing them up, as it were, into victory by the abundance of light which he still brings with him into the world. In like manner, the glorious gospel of Jesus Christ brings that excess of blessedness and glory unto men which drowns all consideration and thought of such differences in their outward estates and conditions, which before seemed to distinguish them into mountains and molehills, into men happy, and men miserable; even as the vastness of the globe or body of the earth causeth the mathematician, who yet useth to be very exact

and punctual in his demonstrations, not so much as to mention, or take any notice either of the highest mountains or lowest valleys in his account concerning the figure of it, but pronounceth it perfectly spherical or round notwithstanding these.

See here what different effects the gospel hath upon the children of men ; even as the sun hath in respect of his hot beams ; i. e., if it shines upon wax it softens that, but if it shines upon clay it hardens that ; also it shines upon a garden and causeth the herbs and flowers thereof to send forth a fragrant scent ; it shines upon a filthy dunghill, and what a loathsome stench doth the same beam produce ! So the gospel sun makes the hearts of believers soft and tender ; but it tends (through sin and Satan's temptations) to make the hearts of some wicked men more hard ; " the gospel is a savour of life unto life " unto some, &c. 2 Cor. ii. 16.—
SPENCER.

I have seen a waste of stones with scarcely anything of soil amongst them. Yet even there, were one or two solitary flowers in blossoms. The wind had scattered there the seeds, the dews of heaven had fallen upon them, the little germs within had found something wherein to strike root ; and the plants had sprung up and flowered unobserved. Those plants shall wither there, and decay, and form a vegetable mould, the fit receptacle of other seeds, that shall spring up into other flowers, till the stony waste be covered with soil, and the soil with verdure and bloom. Thus are the seeds of the gospel carried abroad into heathen lands ; thus are they fostered by the blessed Spirit of God ; thus do they find in one or two happy hearts a soil wherein to strike ; and thus do they spring up into the beautiful flower of a holy life. And thus do the holy life and happy death of every saint of God afford a precious help to the preached gospel ; and the soil becomes deeper, and the verdure extends further, till, according to the sure word of prophecy, the whole waste of heathen land be turned into " the garden of the Lord."

The interest felt by the angels in all that concerns the gospel, and the eternal interests of men, put on their pro-

bation, form a very humbling contrast to our cold indifference in what concerns us much more nearly than them. It is as if a ship nearing a lee shore in the midst of tremendous breakers, while every inhabitant of the neighbouring coast was watching her progress with beating hearts, and longing to see her delivered, the passengers and crew should pursue their wonted amusements; or, hanging over the straining sides, idly speculate on the number of billows, and sport with the raging foam. Alas! with the hosts of heaven there is all sympathy and intense interest—with perishing men all apathy and madness.—CHRISTIAN LADY'S MAGAZINE.

The divine character of the gospel appears in this—in its wonderful capacity to adapt itself to the boundless wants of the whole family of man. It is like the mighty ocean which rolls itself on the wide-spreading shores of a hundred empires, and yet replenishes and fills with its tide the little creek. Thus the gospel, while it visits with its healing waters the wide-spreading church of Christ, fills, and supplies with the waters of life, the soul of the meanest believer in Jesus.

The gospel is a plant which is not affected by earthly changes. It is the same in the temperate as in the torrid zone, and as in the frigid. It does not seem to be scorched by heats, or benumbed by cold: age does not diminish the freshness of its bloom; soil does not affect its nature; climate does not modify its peculiar properties. Among the frost-bound latitudes of North America, and the burning sands of Africa, or the fertile plains of India, we find it still shooting up the same plant of renown, the same vine of the Lord's right hand planting, the same "tree of life" raised up from the beginning of time, "whose leaves were for the healing of the nations;" and under which all kindreds, and tribes, and tongues, and people, shall one day rejoice when privileged to take shelter under its all-covering shade, and draw refreshing nourishment from its perennial fruits.

Philosophy, or rather discovery, has represented that there is a gravitating centre which is the central point of all the movements concurrent and contradictory, that appear in the visible heavens, and which are extended through the

invisible regions of space in the universe; and we have thought, what a sublime point it would be to occupy, could some intelligent being stand there capable of looking through the vast machinery around him, analysing the movement of those mighty orbs through all their revolutions, and seeing this great influence combining and preserving all in their places! But what is imagination in one case is fact in another. We are placed at this moment with the Bible in our hands in that central point of light and influence; we are standing at that point in the moral universe from which we can look abroad, and see the ten thousand various movements of the moral world, combined, and united, and made to concur under the sustaining power and government of God; by that power which is influencing, and directing all. Standing in the great point of light and energy, we can see the various mission societies, and associations, held together in one great bond of principle—the diffusion of the light and knowledge of Christ through the darkness of the world—till all worlds, all lands, shall unite in the great harmonious and heavenly strain, “Hallelujah! for the Lord God omnipotent reigneth.”

At first but a beam of light is seen to glimmer in the midst of the darkness.* And the night still seems to hold its undisturbed sway. But the beam becomes slowly a streak of light shooting its way in the path of heaven. It becomes more fixed and determinate in its character; it increases, it is a glowing light. There is a mass of darkness still around, and clouds yet hang about it; but it contends successfully with the darkness, still it penetrates, 'till it breaks through the hideous mass; the contest is no longer doubtful, and the clouds and shadows flee away. But the rising beam at first so faintly seen, and dimly visible, would have been soon lost and overwhelmed in the darkness which it invaded, if it had not been a beam from an exhaustless fountain of light, the sun. That continued to send forth supplies of strength, by adding beam upon beam. And now it pours out its effulgent rays, and now this dawning

* This simile has been used before, to illustrate the progress of conversion in the believer, page 44.

beam is become a bright and glorious sun, ascending majestically through the heavens, the mighty creative principle of fruitfulness, ripening, maturing, and enriching the vegetable kingdom, and in its brightness showing forth a faint image of its Maker's glory. In like manner the first manifestation of the gospel is like that little beam of light. The land which it visits is involved in the deepest shades of darkness. A mental and spiritual midnight rests upon it. But it becomes a growing light, and as it flashes its beams around, it only serves to make more visible the darkness and misery of the benighted inhabitants. What though its enemies deny it to be the true light—and though all the clouds of heathen darkness and superstition overhang its pathway, yet it still contends, and contends successfully, penetrating the foul and hideous mass of corruption around it. And so this little beam would have been long since overwhelmed and swallowed up, if it had not been supplied from the exhaustless fountain of the Sun of Righteousness; if it had not the promise, "thy light shall no more go down;" yes, and soon this increasing light is destined to ascend the heavens, and fill the whole horizon with its beams. Like the natural sun it shall continue its noble and majestic course till its light shall fall upon every darkened nook of the habitable world, manifesting itself, as it everywhere rolls its course, the mighty creative principle of fruitfulness, enriching the world, civilising it with true knowledge, and making it to flourish everywhere with the fruits of peace, happiness, good will and love to God and man:—a sun that shall never go down, but continue to shine till the light of grace is lost and swallowed up in the more illustrious splendours of the light of glory.

A party of the Syrian host, as they were foraging about, alighted upon a little Hebrew maid; they brought her to Naaman, their commander-in-chief; he bestows her upon his wife; the girl, perceiving that he was infected with leprosy, said unto her mistress, "Would to God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria, he would soon deliver him of his leprosy." Such is the voice of the gospel to every unrepentant sinner; O that you would come to Christ, seek

after him with a lively faith and repentance for your sins ; he would deliver you from the threatenings of the law, and release you from those impossible conditions, which you are there bound unto ; he hath conquered death and hell for your sakes, paid the ransom for your sins, and in the end, by his redemption, will bring you to life everlasting.—
SPENCER.

As the scope of the sun is in all the world, and yet at one time the sun doth not shine in all the parts thereof, it be-
ginneth in the east and passeth to the south, and so to the west ; and as it passeth forward, bringeth light to one place, withdraweth from another : so is it in regard of the Sun of Righteousness, the sunshine of the gospel ; he hath a right to the whole earth, but he hath not at the same time possession of the whole earth : the propriety of all is his, but he taketh possession of it all, successively, and by parts ; the eastern churches, the southern have had his light ; which now are in darkness for the most part ; and we that are more northerly, do now enjoy the clearest noontide ; but the sun hath now arisen in the west, and whether after noon our light will set, God knoweth ; yet the cause hereof is not in the Sun of Righteousness, as the cause why all have not light at one time is in the material sun. The material sun cannot at one time enlighten all. The Sun of Righteousness can. But for the sins of the people the candlestick is removed, and given to a nation that will bear more fruit ; we interpose our earthliness between ourselves and the sun, and so exclude ourselves from the beams thereof.—IBID.

Think not that the beauties of this world are for the rich and great alone. The illuminated drawing-room, the greenhouse, and the hot-house, they are theirs ; but the quiet moonlight, the nightly heavens, with their multitude of shining worlds, the sun spreading his splendour over a sky of cloudless blue, or lighting up the clouds of evening with a thousand gorgeous hues, the air perfumed in its passage over fields and heath, the lovely flowers of the wild, and hedge-row, these are provided by a beneficent God for rich and poor alike. And who would leave these for the painted gaieties of art ? So the blessings of the gospel are not for

the learned alone. They may taste the beauties of the inspired poetry better, and penetrate more deeply into the few obscurities of holy writ: but the comforts of the Bible, pardon of sin, reconciliation with God, peace, and holiness, and heaven—these are for all; these gladden the heart of the labourer at his toil, of the patient of an hospital on his dying bed. And beware then how thou quit these divine consolations for all that learning can offer.

Meditation takes the veil off from the face of truth. The glory and beauty of truth doth not consist in an expression, but we ought to penetrate into the nature of it by reflection. We have an expression of Solomon, speaking of knowledge and understanding, he bids us to *search for her as for hidden treasure*; observe the expression,—you know jewels do not lie upon the surface of the ground, but they are hid in the receptacles of the earth, you must dig for them before you can enjoy them. Truth is *in profundo*, and our understandings are dark. Now you must search for the truth of God as for hid treasures. He that rides post through a country is never able to make a full description of it; and he that takes but a transitory view of the truths of the gospel, will never come to the full knowledge of them. 'Tis meditation makes them appear to our eye in their beauty and lustre. Take a similitude of Peter Martyr. Suppose a person should for the first time see a company of men dancing at a great distance, he would look upon the men as full of madness and frenzy; but if he draw near, then he will find their motions regular and full of art: so, many mysteries of the gospel, if you look upon them at a distance, they are above reason, they seem to oppose sense, you cannot see the truth of them; but bring them to a near distance within the view of thy soul by meditation, and then you will see their excellency and glory.

Grace.

It was observed by a Spanish confessor, who was also a famous preacher, that in persons not very religious, confessions, which they made upon their deathbed, were the coldest, the most imperfect, and with less contrition than all that he had observed them to make in many years before. For so the canes of Egypt, when they newly arise from their bed of slime and mud of Nilus, start up into an equal and continual length, and are interrupted but with few knots, and are strong and beauteous, with great distances and intervals; but when they are grown to their full length, they lessen into the point of a pyramid, and multiply their knots and joints, interrupting the fineness and smoothness of its body; so are the steps and declensions of him that does not grow in grace. At first, when he springs from his impurity by the waters of baptism and repentance, he grows straight and strong, and suffers but few interruptions of piety; and his constant courses of religion are but rarely intermitted, till they ascend up to a full age, or towards the end of their life; then they are weak, and their devotions often intermitted, and their breaches are frequent, and they seek excuses, and labour for dispensations, and love God and religion less and less—till their old age, instead of a crown of their virtue and perseverance, ends in levity and unprofitable causes; light and useless as the tufted feathers upon the cane, every wind can play with it and abuse it, but no man can make it useful. When, therefore, our piety interrupts its greater and more solemn expressions, and, upon the return of the greater offices and bigger solemnities, we find them to come upon our spirits like the wave of a tide, which retired only because it was natural so to do, and yet came farther upon the strand at the next rolling; when every new confession, every succeeding communion, every time of separation for more solemn and intense prayer is better spent, and more affectionate, leaving a greater relish

upon the spirit, and possessing greater portions of our affections, our reason, and our choice—then we may give God thanks.

How is natural life maintained? By continual acts of inspiration. The acts of breathing which I performed yesterday, will not keep me alive to-day. I must continue to breathe afresh, and so, to receive grace every moment, in order to my enjoying the consolations, and to my working the works of God.

The growth of grace in the heart may be compared to the process of polishing metals. First, you have a dark opaque substance, neither possessing nor reflecting light. Presently, as the polisher plies his work, you will see here and there a spark darting out; then a strong light, till, by-and-bye, it sends back a perfect image of the sun which shines upon it. So the work of grace, if begun in our hearts, must be gradually and continually going on; and it will not be completed till the image of God can be seen perfectly reflected in us.

God holds out to you, as it were, a thread not stronger than a spider's web, and says—"Take hold of this thread; I will increase its strength day by day, until it becomes the line of salvation to you." So it is with grace. If you cherish this, if you reflect upon what you read and hear, and daily pray to be made wise by these instructions, God will increase your interest to its consummation, till you become perfect ones in Christ Jesus. But if you lose your hold on this thread, you are lost.

O to think that I was once in that black roll of those excluded from the kingdom! *Such were some of you*; and then to consider, that my name was taken out, and washed by the blood of Christ, to be enrolled in the register of heaven. What an astonishing thing is it! You see in nature God hath appointed contrarieties and varieties to beautify the world; and certainly many things could not be known how good and beneficial they are, but by the smart and hurt of that which is opposite to them; as you could not imagine the good of light, but by some sensible experience of the evil of darkness. Heat, you could not know

the full benefit of it, but by the vexation of cold. Thus he maketh one to commend another, and both to beautify the world. It is thus in art; contrariety, and variety of colours and lines, make up one beauty: diversity of sounds makes a sweet harmony. Now, this is the art and wisdom of God; in the dispensation of his grace, he setteth the misery of some beside the happiness of others, that each of them may aggravate another; he puts light beside darkness, spirit fore against flesh, that so saints may have a double accession to their admiration at the goodness and grace of God, and to their delight and complacency in their own happiness: he presents the state of man out of Christ, that you may wonder how you are "translated," and may be so abundantly satisfied as not to exchange your portion for the greatest monarchy.

He who hears sermons, and doth not do them, is a monster in religion. He is all head and ears, having neither hands to work with, nor feet to walk with. There is a disease to which children are subject, called the rickets, wherein their heads swell as large as two heads, and their legs are crooked, which hinders their going. We have many rickety Christians; they hear much, and their heads swell with empty notions and undigested opinions, but their legs are crooked, their walking is perverse; every such person is a mocker of God, or deceiver of himself, a discourager of ministers, a barren soil, a bad servant, a mere beholder of himself in a glass, a builder of his house upon the sand.—THE PORTFOLIO.

The heart of a true Christian is always the seat of grace, though he may not always be actually able to discern it. A sun-dial is a sun-dial; and the characters are strongly marked upon it, though we cannot see which way it points, but when the sun shines upon it.

When a pearl or diamond is defiled with dust or mire, its lustre cannot be discerned until it be washed. When corruptions are great, and experiences small, a little grace can hardly be discerned; as a needle is more difficult to be discerned than a staff.

Inherent grace, below, resembles silver in the ore; which,

though genuine silver, is mingled with much earth and dross: glory above, resembles silver refined to its proper standard, and wrought into vessels of the most exquisite workmanship.

We are apt to suppose that God is such an one as ourselves. If we wish to enjoy the patronage of a great man, we very naturally think we must say or do something that may acquire his esteem, and recommend us to his notice. Thus would we also treat with God; when, alas! the plain truth is, we can have, and say, and do, nothing that he approves, until he himself give it of his free grace, and work it in us by his Spirit.

Weak grace is real grace—however feeble its commencement, yet is it a reality in the soul of man. If we had rescued some poor struggling creature from the waves, one whom we had watched buffeting with the storm, and had seen sink at last beneath the many waters—if we had brought him to the shore, and yet could mark no evidence of life in him, not a breath stirring, not an eyelid moving, not one single gesture to describe consciousness, but all apparent death—we go on in hope, we use every means, persevere in every remedy, and at last we hear one feeble sigh, we see the eyelash gently move, we see some little change in the features. What conclusion do we draw from it? *He lives; he has life*; life as real as if he walked and moved; as essentially as if we saw him rise in all the vigour, and strength, and power of health and animation. Look at the dead sinner—there he stands “dead in trespasses and sins;” nothing moves him; we preach to him the terrors of the law, we speak to him, though dead, just as Ezekiel spake to the dry bones; the mandate goes forth from the eternal God, “Go, my Spirit, and touch his heart; go and enlighten his conscience; go and take away that hard clod that bears upon his affections; go and convey life into his soul.” What is the effect? He begins to feel sin; he begins now to cry out, “God be merciful to me a sinner.” “Lord save me, or I perish.” We begin now to see him a praying man. “Behold he prayeth.” We find that that individual who was “enmity against God, by reason of his wicked works,”

now turning to the wall, and calling upon God. We find him now pleading the blood of Christ—looking to him for mercy to pardon, and grace to sanctify. This is a reality. It is as real as the evil principle is real within him. It is no fancy that he has inherited an evil principle in his heart from the first Adam: so is it no fancy, but a reality, that he hath received a holy principle from the second Adam, communicated to him by the eternal Spirit.

Grace in the saints is not like light in the sun, that springs from itself, but like the light of a lamp that is constantly fed with supplies of oil, otherwise the weak light will faint and die. Inherent grace is maintained by the continual emanations from the Holy Spirit: nay, the habits of grace are drawn forth into active and vigorous exercise, by supervehement exciting grace, without which they would be ineffective and useless. As there cannot be actual sight unless the organs of sight be irradiated by light of the air; so without special assisting grace we cannot do any spiritual good, nor avoid evil: we shall be foiled by every temptation, even the best will leave God, and provoke God to leave them.

Suppose two persons, at the same time, to set off for the same place, yet have unequal distances. Though the length of the way to be travelled over be greater in the one case than the other, yet they may both arrive at the same time. And it is equally clear that he who started from the greatest distance may arrive the soonest with an increased rate of motion. But should his pace be only equal to, or even slower than that of the other, a much greater time would be required to accomplish the distance. It is thus with two pilgrims who are called to travel in the kingdom of grace. The one who is converted some years previous to the other, may yet go forward so slowly, that the latter may soon reach his attainments in the divine life. In a little while he will evidently outstrip him, and his light and eminence as a Christian will be far more conspicuous if he continue to enjoy the same advantages, and to press forwards with the same earnest diligence. But let a man who is called late in years only use the same means and exertions, and enjoy no superior advantages to those Christians who were called in

their younger days, and how long and toilsome will be his way! But should he be more careless, and less zealous and earnest in pressing on, how wofully and sadly will he be left behind: and how many must be his secret misgivings and fears lest he should not attain the meetness and ripeness of his happier brethren! Let then the old in years and young in grace lay it deeply to heart, that they give all diligence to make their calling and election sure.

The varying state and condition of grace in the soul, may be aptly compared to a little brook which undergoes the changes of the seasons. Sometimes full, its swelling waters are ready to overleap their banks, and seem to say that they shall never fail. But again we see it low and scarcely able to supply its feeble stream. And how does grace seem to fill every faculty of the soul, and we are ready to say inwardly, It shall be ever thus with us, we would "walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance, and in thy name will we be exalted." But again how does the stream run? it seems like that rivulet which we sometimes mark in the green valley; we cannot see it there, we can trace out the little bank of green on each side, and that is all; and sometimes it is so dried up, one can hardly see any track of it at all. What are we to do? To live by faith; for though the stream is so shallow, the fountain is full. What more encouraging than that, though I be nothing, "Christ is all"—Christ is enough for me; his grace is sufficient, and he is ready to give me all I want. The fault is not in him, but in me; he has enough and to spare; for although my stream hardly keepeth on its way, yet his is the full fountain running over in all the fulness of its own essence, in all the goodness of its own nature.

Take heed that thou dost not mistake and think thy grace decays, when, may be, 'tis only thy temptations increase, and not thy grace decreases. If you should hear a man say, because he cannot to-day run so fast, when an hundred weight is on his back, as he could yesterday without any such a burthen, that therefore he was grown weaker, you would soon tell him where his mistake lies.

The Christian's care should be to get his armour speedily

repaired ; a battered helmet is next to no helmet in point of present use ; grace in decay is like a man pulled off his legs by sickness ; if some means be not used to recover it, little service will be done by it, or comfort received from it. Therefore Christ gives the Church of Ephesus (to whom Paul wrote the epistle) this counsel : “ To remember from whence she was fallen, to repent, and do her first works.” How many does a declining Christian wrong at once !

Grace is a plant of heaven, productive of fruits suitable to its quality ; and 'tis proper to its nature to be tending to perfection. A tree that ceases to grow before it is come to its perfection, and brings not forth fruit in its season, withers and dies. A Christian that continues unfruitful has no life, but is exposed to the just threatening of excision and the fire. He that limits himself in religion is in a state of death. Men must be disenchanted from that pernicious persuasion, that without using sincere endeavours to be *perfectly* holy, they may safely go to heaven.

Observe whether Satan is not more than ordinarily let loose to assault thee ; whether thy temptations come not with more force and violence than ever ; possibly, though thou dost not with the same facility overcome these, as thou hast done less, yet grace may act stronger in conflicting with the greater than in overcoming the less. The same ship that when light ballasted and favoured with the wind goes mounting, at another time deeply laden, and going against wind and tide, may move with a slow pace, and yet they in the ship take more pains to make it sail thus, than they did when it went faster.

How much does it amplify the loss of any good thing when nothing is left ! After the harvest, if there be some gleanings ; though a tree be cut down, yet if there be a root left ; though the sun go down, yet if it be twilight—these small remainders are no small refreshings ; but when God leaves no sparkles of grace that may be kindled again, we may write *Lo-ruhamā* on that soul.—SPENCER.

Unregenerate men grow but in the generalities flourishes, devout representation, and the formalities of Christianity. Which is like the growth of seed springing out of the stony

ground; but the honest and good heart bringeth forth fruit in patience: spiritual stumblings there may be; but as good seed in a good soil, being refreshed after a binding drought with a shower, springs up faster and more freshly; so it is with the sound-hearted Christian, after a damp in grace, to which he may sometimes be subject. For being raised and quickened out of such a state by the awakening voice of a piercing ministry, the cutting sting of a heavy cross, or some other special hand of God, he lays hold upon the kingdom of Christ with more violence than before, and labours afterwards, by the help of God, to repair his former spiritual decay, with double diligence. Progress in christian grace is compared to the ascending of the sun in midday, which may be overcast with a cloud; but, after he has recovered a clear sky, shines more brightly and sweetly.

The grandest operations both in nature and in grace are the most silent and imperceptible. The shallow brook bubbles in its passage, and is heard by every one; but the coming on of the seasons is silent and unseen. The storm rages and alarms; but its fury is soon exhausted, and its effects are partial, and soon remedied; but the dew, though gentle and unheard, is immense in quantity, and the very life of large portions of the earth. And these are pictures of the operation of grace in the church, and in the soul.

Grace in the believer sets the heart upon God above all. It may and doth love creatures as the print of his power and goodness; ordinances as the conduit-pipes of his grace and spirit; and saints as the pictures and resemblances of his image; but it sets his heart upon God above all. This principle is a fire dropt down from heaven into the heart to consume the dross of corruption, and inflame the affections for God; 'tis a touch from Christ risen, and sitting in glory, to raise up the affections out of the tombs and graves of earthly vanities, and to quicken and inspire them with the life of God, that God may be "all in all" therein.

Prov. xxi. 1. The king's heart is in the hand of the Lord, as the rivers of water: he turneth it whithersoever he will. The simile here employed is taken from the method of watering gardens in the East, by means of small rills or

canals, dug from one stream, and running in different directions as occasion requires. Thus, the direction of the heart is in the hand of Jehovah, as the distribution of water through the garden is at the will of the gardener. The *nature* of the water is not here altered, nor is any force put upon it: so God's providence does not interfere with man's free will, nor change his affections, but only directs the course of them to serve his own purpose.

The new principle which is implanted in us by divine grace is engrafted on a corrupt nature. It is like the graft of a tree; the upper part only is the graft; it is something added to an old stock. Just so, the new principle is something added and superinduced on the old stock of the old Adam-nature which is in us.

Weakness of grace is frequently attended with excessive and passionate joys and strong fancies. These persons are like a ship that is tossed in the tempest; that is, one while lifted up as to the clouds, and presently cast down as into an infernal gulf; one day in great joy, and the next in as great perplexity and sorrow.

A beautiful person without true grace is but a fair stinking weed; you know the best of such an one if you look on her furthest off; whereas a sincere heart, without this outward beauty to commend it, is like some sweet flower, (not painted with such fine colours on the leaves,) better in the hand than eye, to smell on, than look on; the nearer you come to the sincere soul, the better you find him.

Outward uncomeliness to true grace is but as some old, mean building you sometimes see stand before a goodly, stately house; which hides its glory only from the traveller that passeth by it at some distance; but he that cometh in sees the beauty, and admires it.

As an instrument, even when it has an edge, cutteth nothing until it is assisted and moved by the hand of the artificer; so a Christian, when he has a will and an habitual fitness to work, yet is able to do nothing without the constant supply, assistance, and concomitancy of the grace of Christ exciting, moving, and supplying that habitual power unto particular actions.

As light is necessary and requisite unto seeing, and yet there is no seeing without an eye ; so without the assisting grace of Christ's spirit concurring with us unto every holy duty, we can do nothing : and yet that grace presupposes an implanted and habitual grace fore-disposing the soul unto the said duties.

Grace in a young believer, inasmuch as there is yet much unmortified corruption, acts with more difficulty, as in a fire newly kindled, where the smoke is more than the flame ; so like beer newly tunned, which runs thick.

There is no doubt but Christ communicates supplies of grace for their increase in holiness to all his saints. Whence then is it that they do not all flourish and thrive accordingly ? As you may see it oftentimes in a natural body, so it is here. Though the seat and rise of the blood in the heart be excellently good and sound, yet there may be a withering member in the body ; somewhat intercepts the influences of life unto it. So that though the heart performs its office, in giving supplies no less to that than it does any other member, yet all the effect produced is, merely to keep it from utter perishing ; it grows weak, and decays every day. The withering and decaying of any member in Christ's mystical body is not for the want of his communications of grace for an abundant life, but from the powerful interception that is made of the inefficacy of it by the interposition and opposition of indwelling sin. Oftentimes Christ gives very much grace where not many of its effects do appear. It spends its strength and power in withstanding the continual assaults of violent corruptions and lusts, so that it cannot put forth its proper virtue towards further fruitfulness. As a virtuous medicine, that is fit both to check vicious and noxious humours, and to comfort, refresh, and strengthen nature ; if the evil humour be strong and greatly prevailing, spends its whole strength and virtue in the subduing and correcting of it, contributing much less to the relief of nature than otherwise it would do, if it met not with much opposition ; so is it with eye-salve, and the healing grace which we have abundantly from "the wings" of the Sun of Righteousness. It is forced oftentimes to put forth its virtue to oppose and contend against, and in any measure subdue,

prevailing lusts and corruptions; that the soul receiveth not that strengthening unto duties and fruitfulness which otherwise it might receive by it, is from hence. How sound, healthy, and flourishing, how fruitful and exemplary in holiness, might many a soul be, by, and with that grace which is continually communicated to it from Christ, which now, by reason of the power of indwelling sin, is only not dead, but weak, withering, and useless. This makes the vineyard in the very fruitful hill to bring forth so many wild grapes. This makes so many trees barren in fertile fields.

Either exercise thy grace, or Satan will act thy corruption; as one bucket goes down the other riseth; there is a body of sin within, which, like a malignant party, watcheth for such a time to step into the saddle, and 'tis easier to keep them down than to pull them down. Thy time is short, and thy way long; thou hadst best put on, lest thou meanest to be overtaken with night, before thou gettest within sight of thy Father's house. How uncomfortable 'tis for a traveller in heaven-road (above all other) to go in the dark, many can with aching hearts tell thee. And what hast thou here to mind like this? Are they worldly cares and pleasures? Is it wisdom to lay out so much cost on thy tenement, which thou art leaving, and forget what thou must carry with thee? The world is near its port, and therefore God hath contracted the sails of man's life; but awhile, and there will not be a point to choose, whether we had wives or not, riches or not; but there will be a vast difference between those that had grace, and those that had not; yea, between those that did drive a quick trade in the exercise thereof, and those that were more remiss; the one shall have an "abundant entrance into glory," (2 Pet. i. 11,) while the other shall suffer loss in much of his lading, which shall be cast overboard as merchandise that will bear no price in that heavenly country.

Try by this whether you have grace or no, dost thou walk in the exercise of thy grace? He that hath clothes, surely will wear them, and not be seen naked. Men talk of their faith, repentance, love to God; these are precious graces;

but why do they not let us see these walking abroad in their daily conversation? Surely if such guests were in thy soul, they would look out of the window sometimes, and be seen abroad in their duty, and holy action. Grace is of a stirring nature, and not such a dead thing (like an image) which you may lock up in a chest, and none shall know what God you worship; no, grace will show itself, it will walk with you in all places and companies; it will buy with you, and sell for you; it will have a hand in all your enterprises; it will comfort you when you are sincere and faithful to God, and it will complain and chide you when you are otherwise; go to, stop its mouth, and heaven shall hear its voice; it will groan, mourn, and strive; even as a living man when you smother him. I will as soon believe the man to be alive, that lies peaceably as he is nailed up in his coffin, without strife, or bustle, as that thou hast grace, and never exercisest it in any acts of spiritual life. What, man! hast thou grace, and carried so peaceably, as a fool to the stocks, by thy lust? If thou be such a tame slave as to sit still under the command of lust, thou deceivest thyself.

Why blooms one tree in yonder vale, more than another? Must friendly mountains, the wide-spreading plain, the flowing river which runs hard by it, the swelling breeze, the fertile soil, the showers, the precious dew, the all-producing sun, have alone the praise? Or must that God that made the sun, who fills the clouds with rain, directs the shower where to fall, who withholds the north wind, and from his boundless treasures sends the south—who framed the soil, and taught the fruitful rivers where to flow,—have all the glory? How much more of grace, which is contained in no creature system, but ever flows immediate from himself!

The distinction between nature and grace consists in a reversed current of the affections—that between grace and glory consists in the tenor of that current. In the state of regeneration here below, it is alone obstructed, and unequal. In the future state the current will flow back to its ocean, in fulness of tide, without interruption or inequality of motion. *Now* it is the circulation of the vital fluids in a state of oppressive disease—*then* in one of complete and eternal health.

Take a river—let it be dammed and stopped up, yet, if the course of it be natural, if the vent and stream of it be to go downward, at length it will overbear, and ride triumphantly over: or let water that is sweet be made brackish by the coming in of the salt water; yet, if it naturally be sweet, at the length it will work it out. So it is with every man; look what the constant stream of his disposition is, look what the frame of it is; if it is grace, that which is now natural and inward to a man, though it may be dammed up, and stopped in such a course for a while, yet it will break through all at the last; and though there be some brackish and some sinful dispositions that may break in upon a man, yet by the grace of God he will wear them out, because his natural disposition, the frame of his heart, runs another way.

The virgin vestals of the Pagans had a continual fire, which if it happened by any mischance to go out, they might not give it light again, only from the sun. Thus our natural cleanness and purity of life being quite extinguished by the sin of Adam, there is no means under heaven to renew it—we cannot kindle it again but at the Sun of Righteousness, Christ Jesus our Lord, to whom belongeth that which is said in Psalm xxxvi. 9—"The fountain of life is with thee," &c.

A young scholar, when he has gotten his lesson once by heart, thinketh he hath as much logic as his tutor can teach him; but when he cometh to understand things, he seeth his own error. And so the raw students at Athens, when they were but yet freshmen, they thought that they moved in a circle of knowledge; they would be called Sophoi, wise men; but having spent some time at their books, they found themselves at a loss, and thought it a great honour to be called Philo-Sophi, lovers of wisdom: and last of all, having made some good progress through the arts and sciences, they accounted themselves Moroi, that understood nothing at all; the more knowledge they had, the more they discovered their own weakness and ignorance. So the more men believe, the more they come to see and feel their unbelief; the further they wade on in the study and practice of repentance, the more they find out and discover their

own impenitency, and complain of the hardness and untowardness of their own hearts. The more they labour and make progress in sound sanctification, the more they come to apprehend and see their own corruptions. And this very sense of wanting grace is an argument of grace, for Christ saith, blessed are the poor, as well as pure, in spirit; the one shall see God, and the other hath a present right to the kingdom of heaven, which is the same in effect.—SPENCER.

Look at a coal covered with ashes; there is nothing appearing in the hearth but only dead ashes; there is neither light, nor smoke, nor heat; and yet when these embers are stirred to the bottom, there are found some living gleads, which do but contain fire, and are apt to propagate it. Many a christian breast is like this hearth, no life of grace appearing there for the time, either to his own sense or to the apprehension of others. Whilst the season of temptation lasteth, all seems cold and dead; yet still at the worst, there is a secret coal in their bosom, which, upon the gracious motion of the Almighty, doth manifest some remainders of that divine fire, as is easily raised to a perfect flame. Let no man, therefore, deject himself, or censure others, for the utter extinction of that spirit which doth but hide itself in the soul for a glorious advantage.—IBID.

St. Chrysostom, suffering under the Empress Eudocia, tells his friend Cynacus how he armed himself beforehand. I thought would she banish me, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Take away my lands, "Naked came I into the world, and naked must I return." Will they stone me? I remembered Stephen. Behead me? John Baptist came into my mind, &c. Thus it should be with every one that intends to live and die comfortably; they must, as we say, lay up something for a rainy day; they must stock themselves with grace; store up promises, and furnish themselves with experience of God's loving-kindness to others, and themselves too, that so, when the evil day comes, they may have much good coming thereby.—IBID.

I grant it as true, that the sincere soul grows stronger; but how? Even as the tree grows higher and bigger, which

we know meets with a fall of the leaf, and winter, that for a while intermits its growth. Thus the sincere soul may be put to a present stand by some temptation ; as Peter, who was far from growing stronger when he fell from professing to denying—from denying Christ to swearing and cursing ! Yet as the tree, when spring comes, revives and gains more in the summer than it loseth in the winter, so doth the sincere soul, as we see in Peter, whose grace, which was quenched for a while, came forth with such a force, that no cruelty from men could drive it in ever after. Shaking temptations end in settlement, according to the apostle's prayer, 1 Pet. v. 10. *The God of all grace, after ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.*—IBID.

When we behold primroses and violets fairly to flourish, we conclude the dead of the winter is past, though as yet no roses or julyflowers appear, which long after lie hid in their leaves, or lurk in their roots ; but in due time will discover themselves. Thus, if some small buddings of grace do but appear in the soul, it is an argument of far greater growth ; if some signs be but above ground in sight, others are under ground in the heart ; and though the former started first, the other will follow in order ; it being plain that such a man is *passed from death unto life*, by this hopeful and happy spring of some signs in the heart.—IBID.

The faculties of the soul, to be preserved in a healthy state, must be kept in continual exercise. We see it in the human body, where, in the want of exercise, the circulation of the blood becomes languid, and its energies poor and enfeebled. We see it in the atmosphere, which, if suffered to stagnate from the want of healthy gales and storms, depresses and paralyses life. And we see it in rivers, where a stream only preserves its crystal clearness and purity by continual running ; if its course be stopped, it will stagnate and putrefy. And in like manner the purity and healthiness of the soul is alone preserved by the constant exercise of habitual grace.

Carnal men are apt to mistake presumption for faith, and think, the bolder they are in presuming without a promise,

the stronger they are in believing. They mistake a fruitless sorrow for sin to be repentance. And because they do not sit down altogether quiet and contented under sin, but are in *motion*, they judge that they are going forwards. But let a man put himself in any part of the circumference of a circle, and continue to move in it, it is undeniable that he is in motion, but it is as clear that he makes no progress in advancing forwards. So these men sin and repent, and after repentance they sin ; and walking in a continual circle of repentings and relapsings, take not one step towards heaven. But real saints are often complaining of their want of grace, and condemning themselves for their not improving the means of grace. Their desires are ardent and ascending to perfection, and they judge of their defects by that measure. He that sails before the wind in a river, and sees men walking on the shore, to his eye they seem to stand still, because of the swift motion of the boat. Thus the saints judge of their imperfections by the swiftness with which they are carried forward in their desires after complete holiness. Thus easily may we mistake in our judgment respecting the truth, or strength, of grace in our souls.

In the world of nature there are shoals and quicksands through which the mariner has to steer, and there are storms and tempests to assail him in his course, and, worst of all, there is shipwreck, destruction, and death to overtake him ; but in the kingdom of grace there are indeed dangers through which we must pass, and many are the by-paths opening from the narrow and straight path in which we are walking ; and many are the storms which fall upon us : but there is no shipwreck, no destruction and death ; for the Lord will never cease to go with us, "till he bring forth judgment unto victory."

There is no greater delusion than the idea that all things are well with us, if we are in a state of grace. The inquiry should be, whether it is grace in operation, grace in living exercise, and daily working in us. It is with grace as it is with fire—it may be in a half lifeless and inert state, and therefore useless. Fire is one of the most active agents in nature with which we are acquainted. You may see it

smouldering in the ashes, without any power to burn or emit any heat. Here, though there is undoubtedly fire in the embers, yet in this state it is profitable to no purpose. But let its dying embers be kindled into flame, and it can rend the living rocks, control the mightiest engines, and prove itself to be endowed with the most astonishing power. So grace, which is capable of the greatest things, may be in a dull and torpid state, and effect nothing; and while in this state, the believer is weak as another man. Here is the presence of grace, but it is without its strength, and so far useless. But let him stir up the grace that is in him, and his soul shall be clothed with energies, and endued with a living power that is truly surprising. It is nature now rising out of her native feebleness, a living active thing exhibiting powers hitherto unknown to herself, and capable of passing on to perfection till the believer shall be filled with all the fulness of God.

Happiness.

If you were to see a man endeavouring all his life to satisfy his thirst by holding up an empty cup to his lips, you would certainly despise his ignorance; but if you should see others of brighter parts, and finer understanding, ridicule the dull satisfaction of one cup, and think to satisfy their own thirst by a variety of golden and gilt empty cups, would you think that these were the wiser, or happier, or better employed for their parts? Now this is all the difference you can see in the happiness of this life. The dull and heavy soul may be content with one empty appearance of happiness. But then let the wit, the great scholar, the fine genius, the great statesman, the polite gentleman, lay all their heads together, and they can only show you more and various empty appearances of happiness; give them all the world into their hands, let them cut and carve as they please, they can only make a greater variety of empty cups: for search as deep, and look as far as you will, there is no-

thing here to be found that is nobler and greater than high eating and drinking, than rich dress and applause and vanity ; unless you look for it in the wisdom and laws of religion.

That misnamed happiness which the world pants to enjoy is no reality ; it leaves no strength and peace behind it, as religion does, but the reverse. It is not like the waters of the Nile which overflow the land of Egypt, and leave, when they are gone, the germs of beauty and fertility to bud and blossom, and cheer the heart of man, but the contrary ; it is as the stream which is daily polluted with the washings of poisonous minerals, sinking the spirits, and depositing the seeds of death and disease in the vitals of all those who drink of it.

How can the religious man be happy, and still be called to suffer, and exposed to much misery ? In answer to this, I would observe, that the soul, like the body, is subject to two distinct kinds of suffering. If a man lies upon his bed, and feels in pain, this pain may arise from one of two causes ; either from what is outward and accidental, or from what is inward and indicative of disease. Should it proceed, for instance, from uneasiness of posture, or from anything hard or sharp-pointed, or any outward annoyance, he has only to rise, or shift his position, and all will be well. But if the pain originate in no such cause, he has then ascertained that his body is, more or less, distempered ; and that, till a more radical remedy be found, he will, in spite of change of place or posture, carry his pain along with him. So it is with the soul. It was once radically distempered. But in the soul of the religious man there is a healthy process going on, and a healing balm for every pain. The great physician cures all *inward* maladies. This moral soundness of spiritual health is the happiness which he both promises and gives to those who come unto him—the happiness which religion imparts. But, like the body in the soundest state, it is exposed to outward annoyances and afflictions. It is “born to trouble,” against which its inward peace is no security. But with the irreligious man, the difference is, that in his case there is disease *within* ; and to whatever

regions the soul may travel, it will carry with it "the worm that dieth not, and the fire that is not quenched." In the other case, the soul is daily becoming more healthful, and is *in itself* a happy being. Its sufferings arise from accidental hindrances, and foreign causes; and *therefore*, when it leaves the body, and passes into brighter regions, it will bid farewell, for ever, to pain and sorrow.

When man was made in the image of God, Happiness, one of the attendant angels which stand before the throne of God, was deputed to wait upon man, and be his constant companion. But when sin marred this beautiful image, and he lost his high nobility, Happiness, who could no longer behold her heavenly Father's image upon earth, sighed to return, and quitting man, ascended to her bright abode in heaven. Man, now wearied and distressed at the loss of his angelic companion, wandered about in quest of a friend to supply her place. He looked out anxiously on Nature, and saw her gay and cheerful—but Nature assured him, in awful accents, she knew no bliss for man. He questioned Love, who appeared so bright and joyous in hope; but she timidly shrank from the inquiry, while her eyes dropt fast with tears. He sought of Friendship, but she sighed and answered, Caprice, anxiety, and the fear of change, are ever with me. He followed after Vice, who boasted loudly, and promised great things; but before she left him, the borrowed roses fell from her withered brow. He thought at last he should succeed if he found Virtue—but she assured him with tender sorrow that penitence was her rightful and proper name, and that the bliss he sought for was not in her power to bestow. Disappointed and wearied, he now in despair applied to Death, who, relaxing his forbidding aspect, smiled upon him, and said, "No longer upon earth can Happiness be found. I am the friend of man, and the guide to Happiness: let the voice of him who died on the cross of Calvary bring man to me, and I am commissioned to conduct him into the presence of Happiness, who shall never leave nor forsake him through the countless ages of eternity.

Hope.

What more delicious than hope? what more satisfactory than success? That is like the pursuit of a flying enemy; this like gathering the spoil: that like gathering the ripe corn; this like the joy of harvest itself. Well-grounded hope confirms resolutions, and success quickens our diligence.

A good hope, through grace, animates and gives life to action, and purifies as it goes; like the highland stream that dashes from the rock, and purifies itself as it pursues its course to the ocean.

The spring returns with its blossoms and flowers, its green foliage and blue sky. The voice of the singing birds are heard once more, and earth adorned as a bride looks forth rejoicing. The storms of winter have passed away, its coldness and desolation are felt no more. So the believer emerges out of all that was dark, and dreary, and chilling, with fears and apprehensions as to an eternal state of things, and a new world of light and gladness springs up to cheer and animate him. Hope in Christ is to the little world of the inner man what spring is to the external world of nature—an animating principle in perpetual operation to soften the present, if it be gloomy, and to gild the prospect before us with bright expectations of good things to come.—LIGHT FROM THE WEST.

The expectation of the man who has his portion in this life is continually deteriorating; for every hour brings him nearer to the loss of all his treasures. But “the good hope through grace” is always approaching its realities, and therefore grows with the lapse of time more valuable and more lively. As it is spiritual in its quality, and heavenly in its object, it does not depend on outward things, and is not affected with the decays of nature. Like the Glastonbury thorn, it blossoms in the depth of winter. The hope of the one is a treasure out at interest which is con-

tinually augmenting; that of the other resembles stock, the capital of which has been continually invaded, until the last pound is ready to be consumed.

Heaven.

From justification arises our title to heaven; from sanctification arises our meetness for it. A king's son is heir apparent to his father's crown. We will suppose the young prince to be educated with all the advantages, and to be possessor of all the attainments, that are necessary to constitute a complete monarch. His accomplishments, however great, do not entitle him to the kingdom; they only qualify him for it: so the holiness and obedience of the saints are no part of that right on which their claim to glory is founded, or for which it is given; but a part of that spiritual education, whereby they are fitted and made meet to inherit "the kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world."

Though the mariner sees not the pole-star, yet the needle of the compass that points to it tells him which way he sails. Thus the heart that is touched with the loadstone of divine love, trembling with godly fear, and yet still looking towards God by fixed believing, points at the love of election, and tells the soul that its course is heavenward towards the haven of eternal rest. *He that loves may be sure that he was loved first*; and he that chooses God for his delight and portion, may conclude confidently, that God hath "chosen" him to be one of those that shall enjoy him and be happy in him for ever: for that our love, and electing of him is but the return and repercussion of the beams of his love shining upon us.

As a dead man cannot inherit an estate, no more can a dead soul (and every soul is spiritually dead until quickened, and born again of the Holy Ghost) inherit the king-

dom of God. Yet, sanctification and holiness of life do not constitute any part of our title to the heavenly inheritance, any more than mere animal life entitles a man of fortune to the estate he enjoys: he could not, indeed, enjoy his estate if he did not live; but his claim to his estate arises from some other quarter. In like manner, it is not our holiness that entitles us to heaven; though no man can enter into heaven without holiness. God's gratuitous donation, and Christ's meritorious righteousness, constitute our right to future glory; while the Holy Ghost, by inspiring us with spiritual life, (of which spiritual life good works are the evidences and the actings,) puts us into a real capability of fitness for that inheritance of endless happiness, which, otherwise, we could never, in the very nature of things, either possess or enjoy.

As a man that comes into America, and sees the natives regard more a piece of glass, or an old knife, than a piece of gold, may think, Surely these people never heard of the worth of gold, or else they would not exchange it for toys; so a man that looked only upon the lives of most men, and did not hear their contrary confessions, would think either these men never heard of heaven, or else they never heard of its excellency and glory: when, alas! they hear of it till they are weary of hearing; and it is offered them so commonly, that they are tired with the tidings, and cry out as the Israelites, "Our soul is dried away, because there is nothing but this manna before our eyes." Numb. xi. 6. And as the Indians who live among the golden mines do little regard it, but are weary of the daily toil of getting it, when other nations will compass the world, and venture their lives, and sail through storms and waves to get it; so we that live where the gospel groweth, where heaven is urged upon us at our doors, and the manna falls upon our tents, do little regard it, and wish these mines of gold were further from us, that we might not be put upon the toil of getting it, when some that want it would be glad of it upon harder terms.

How nimbly does that little lark mount up, singing towards heaven in a right line! whereas the hawk, which is

stronger of body and swifter of wing, towers up by many gradual compasses to his highest pitch. That bulk of body and length of wing hinder a direct ascent, and require the help both of air and scope to advance his flight; while the small bird cuts the air without resistance, and needs no outward furtherance of her motion. It is no otherwise with the souls of men in flying up to their heaven. Some are hindered by those powers which would seem helps to their soaring up thither: great wit, deep judgment, quick apprehension, send about men, with no small labour, for the recovery of their own incumbrance; while the good affections of plain and simple souls raise them up immediately to the fruition of God. Why should we be proud of that which may slacken our way to glory? Why should we be disheartened with the small measure of that, the very want whereof may (as the heart may be affected) facilitate our way to happiness?

Heaven must be begun below in all those who shall enjoy its perfection above. Heaven is a place of character; the full developement of those principles and dispositions which are received and cherished upon earth, by the knowledge of Jesus, and the teaching of his Spirit. No child on its first introduction to a school is placed in the highest class, but in one or other of the lower, where the first elements of a future education are imparted, and the necessary groundwork is laid for the more matured instructions which successively follow: the one must precede the other; there is an unalterable connexion between them: as much so, and as absolutely essential, as between the bud and blossom of a tree, and the fruit which is to follow; or between the state of infancy and that of full-grown manhood; the first of necessity goes before the other. As well, therefore, might we look for the state of manhood, without the previous stages of infancy, childhood, and youth; as well might we expect to reach the fruit from any tree where no buds and blossoms were previously formed, as expect admission into heaven without being "created anew in Christ Jesus unto good works," and made to possess the tempers, learn the principles, and imbibe the dispositions, of its blessed inhabitants,

while, like them, we seek our happiness from "that river of joy" which "waters the city of our God."

As in seeking for a Deity man found the prototype in his own passions, when he had abandoned the one living and true God ; so in forming a heaven he collected the materials from the objects of his own fleshly delights. The elysium of the Greeks and Romans ; the hall of the Scandinavians ; the paradise of the Mahomedans ; the fantastic abode of the departed Hindoos,—are all adapted to their depraved appetites, and were suggested by their corrupt imaginations. Beyond the pleasures of a seraglio ; of a field of glory ; of a hall resounding with the shout of victory ; beyond the gratification of sense, man, when left to himself, never looked for the happiness which is to constitute his paradise. A heaven, made up of perfect knowledge and of perfect love, is a vision entirely and exclusively divine ; and which never beamed upon the human understanding till the splendid image came upon it from the word of God. The wheels of nature are not made to roll backward, everything presses on to eternity ; from the birth of time an impetuous torrent has set in, which bears all the sons of men towards that interminable ocean. Meanwhile heaven is attracting to itself whatever is congenial to its nature, is enriching itself by the spoils of earth, and collecting within its capacious bosom whatever is pure, permanent, and divine, leaving nothing for the last fire to consume but the objects and the slaves of concupiscence ; while everything which grace has prepared and beautified shall be gathered from the ruins of the world, to adorn the eternal city, "which hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon to shine in it ; for the glory of God doth enlighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof." Let us obey the voice that calls us thither ; let us seek the things that are above, and no longer cleave to a world which must perish, and which we must shortly quit.

I have read of a gentleman who died very suddenly, and his jester ran to the other servants, and having told them that their master was dead, he with much gravity said,

“And where is he gone?” The servants replied, “Why, to heaven to be sure!” “No,” said the jester, “he is not gone to heaven, I am certain!” The servants with much warmth asked him how he knew that his master was not gone to heaven? The jester then replied, “Because heaven is a great way off, and I never knew my master take a long journey in his life, but he always talked of it some time beforehand, and also made preparations for it; but I never heard him talk about heaven, nor ever saw him making preparation for death, and therefore I am sure he is not gone to heaven.”—THE PULPIT.

In the way of trade, if a man go and buy a commodity of small value, he lays down ready money; but if the price rise high, and come to a good round sum, then he doth but give something in earnest; the great payment (it may be) comes six or twelve months after. So when men will bargain with God for their obedience, to have credit and esteem in the world, these are but poor trifling matters, and God gives them presently; but because the covenant that is betwixt God and Christ, and so betwixt Christ and us, is about great matters, and God intends to reward his people with glorious things eternally in the heavens, we have but the first-fruits of them at present, and must not expect the fulness of them suddenly; they are great things, and must be waited for with patience till they do come, and being once come, they will make amends for all our tarrying.—SPENCER.

It must, no doubt, contribute to the happiness of the saints in heaven, that though all agree in heart and mind, yet their intercourse will be abundantly enlivened by all which variety can contribute to the enjoyment of society. The infinite diversity of temper and disposition which good men exhibit here, will, it is reasonable to suppose, follow them beyond the grave. Nor amongst the sources of variety will that be the least interesting which arises from the different periods of life at which the several members of the human family are called into eternity. The soul upon which this great change has past in the morning of its days, however it may advance in wisdom and grow in knowledge, may, nevertheless, in its eternal state, still retain the marks of the

seed from which it sprung, and flourish in all the graces of innocence, and all the freshness of unfading youth. In the same manner, those who die in the prime and vigour of maturity, may have indelibly impressed upon their character the dignity and authority of that riper age; while those who gently fall off in "a good old age," may equal, if not surpass, by the calm serenity of their light, the more dazzling brilliancy of the surrounding luminaries.

Our past lives will, when we attain the perfection of our being, be present to us again. There are close analogies between the laws of duration and of space. And these may help us to illustrate the manner in which the several stages of our former existence may reappear. A traveller who sets out upon a line of road, sees, we will suppose, a given object before him as he advances; he comes up with that object, and it is present; he proceeds, and passes it, and sees it no more. But let the traveller be elevated into the air, or ascend a mountain, and the whole line of progress which, as he journeyed, was measured out in gradual succession, becomes all at once present to him again. So with respect to the passenger through time. While here below, he reached and passed his several stages one by one: but when ascended to his eternal state, he may look down and see the whole path of life before him.—WOODWARD.

Here the saints differ in talents; and even in heaven they shall differ in glory; but the glory of each shall be perfect in itself, and every happy spirit shall possess as it *can* enjoy; shall contain a felicity overflowing all, according to the capacity of each. So that while they differ in glory, they are alike and equal in enjoyment, each possessing as much as each can grasp. "There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for one star differeth from another star in glory." No tulip-bed exhibits a richer assemblage of colours than the heavenly bodies, when seen through telescopes of the first order; yet this variety, while each has its own splendour, and is perfect in its kind, adds to the grandeur and beauty of the whole scene.

A man may see the utmost visible part of the earth and

the horizon at once, but if he look on the earth that is near him, he cannot see the heavens at that time, much less the zenith. Our own riches, our present possessions, our nearest and dearest temporal good things, are the greatest averters of the mind from heaven.

The evil attending the formation of habits which are opposed to our moral good is but little estimated. The highest and most important duties are sacrificed for the enjoyment of the moment. Every time the power of resisting these seductions is lessened: the things of eternity must give way for the trifles and gratifications of time. It is mentioned of a friend of Charles I. in the civil war of the parliament, that he had made up his mind to take horse and join the royal party, but for one circumstance, that he could not reconcile himself to the thought of being an hour or two less in bed than he had been accustomed in his own quiet home; and he therefore, after duly reflecting on the impossibility of being both a good subject and a good sleeper, contented himself with remaining to enjoy his repose. Absurd as such an anecdote may seem, it states only what passes innumerable times through the silent heart of those who are enslaved by their habits. In similar comparisons of the most important duties with the most petty but habitual pleasures, how many more virtuous actions would have been performed on earth, if the performance of them had not been inconsistent with enjoyments, as insignificant in themselves as an hour of unnecessary and perhaps hurtful slumber!

It was wont to be a trial, whether land belonged to England or Ireland, by putting in toads, or snakes, or any other venomous creature into it; and if they lived there, it was concluded that the land belonged to England; if they died, to Ireland. So if venomous lusts live in us, if sin reign in our mortal bodies, we belong to hell; but if they die by mortification, if there be no life in them, then shall we be sure to set up our eternal rest in heaven, and have full possession of those mansions which Christ our elder brother hath prepared for us.—SPENCER.

The city and the street of the new Jerusalem, being of

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pure gold, as it were transparent glass, may be an emblem of the union in heaven of those excellencies which seem here to be incompatible. They will be splendid and durable as the purest gold, clear and transparent as the finest glass. In that happy world, the beauties and advantages which are here divided and incompatible, will unite and agree. Our glass is clear, but brittle; our gold is shining and solid, but it is opaque, and discovers only a surface. And thus it is with our minds. The powers of the imagination are lively and extensive; but transient and uncertain. The powers of the understanding are more solid and regular, but at the same time more slow and limited; and confined to the outside properties of the few objects around us: but when we arrive within the veil, the perfection of the glass and gold will be combined, and the imperfection of each will entirely cease. Then we shall know more than we can now imagine. The glass will be all gold, and then we shall apprehend truth in its relations and consequences, not, as at present, by that tedious and fallible process which we call reasoning, but by a single glance of thought, as the sight pierces in an instant through the largest transparent body. The gold will be all glass.

Socrates told a lazy fellow, that would fain go up to the top of Olympus, but that it was so far off; why, said he, walk but as far every day, as thou dost about thine own house, and in so many days thou shalt be sure to be at Olympus. Thus, let but a man employ every day so many serious thoughts upon the excellent glory of the life to come, as he now employeth daily on his necessary affairs in the world; nay, as he loseth daily on vanities and impertinences, and his heart will be at heaven in a very short space.
—SPENCER.

In heaven we cannot suppose the condition of any one saint to be wanting in the measure of its happiness. Such a supposition is opposed to the idea of that perfection to which all shall attain. Nevertheless, as with two luminous bodies, each may shine in perfection, though with a different splendour and intensity; so the image of God will shine with fuller orb'd splendour in some than in others. In like

manner, the little stream and the river may both fill their channel, while the one glides in simple beauty, and the other rolls its majestic waves attracting the eyes of all beholders. And so the spirits of the just made perfect shall all be beautiful, but some shall delight with the perfection of beauty.

“Seek first the kingdom of God, and these things shall be added to you.” But if you seek these things, it is to love them for themselves, and above the kingdom of God ; it is like a man that carries a piece of timber breadth-ways upon his back, and tries to enter a narrow gate with it, but there is no room for a man to get in with such an impediment upon his shoulders. It is not the gate which excludes him—but he thrusts himself out with his own improvidence ; it is a barrier of his own creating.

The infamy of losing heaven we may in some sort declare, under the example of a mighty king, who, having no heir to succeed him in his kingdom, took up a beautiful boy at the church door, and nourished him as his son, and in his testament commanded, that if at ripe years his conditions were virtuous and suitable to his calling, he should be received as a lawful king, and seated on his royal throne ; but if he proved vicious and unfit for government, they should punish him with infamy and send him to the galleys. The kingdom obeyed his command, provided him excellent tutors ; but he became so untoward and ill inclined, that he would learn nothing, flung away his books, spent his time amongst other boys, in making houses of clay and other fooleries ; for which his governors chastised him, and advised him of what was fitting, and most imported him ; but all did no good, only when they reprehended him he would weep ; not because he repented, but because they hindered his sport, and the next day he did the same. The more he grew in age, the worse he became ; and although they informed him of the king's testament, and what behoved him, all was to no purpose ; until at last all being weary of his ill conditions, declared him unworthy to reign, despoiled him of his royal ornaments, and condemned him with infamy unto the galleys. What greater ignominy can

there be than this, to lose a kingdom, and to be made a galley slave? A more ignominious, and a more lamentable tragedy is that of a Christian condemned after his probation; who was taken by God from the gates of death, with condition, that if he kept his commandments, he should reign in heaven, and if not, he should be condemned: but he, forgetting those obligations, without respect of his tutors, or ministers, who exhorted him, both by their doctrine and example, what was fitting for a child of God; yet he, neither moved by their advice, nor the chastisements of heaven, by which God overthrew his vain intentions, and thwarted his unlawful pleasures, only lamented his temporal losses, and not his offences; and at the time of his death, was sentenced to be deprived of the kingdom of heaven, and precipitated into hell: what infamy can be greater than this of the condemned soul?

We are not obliged always to be thinking on the kingdom of God; but to have it frequently in our minds, and habitually to intend and design it, so as to make it the scope of all our endeavours and actions, and that everything we do be either directly and immediately in order to it, or some way or other subservient to this design, or however not inconsistent with it. Like the term and end of a man's journey, towards which the traveller is continually tending, and hath it always habitually in his intention, though he doth not always think of it every step that he takes, and though he be not always directly advancing and moving towards it, yet he never knowingly goes out of the way. And though he bait and lodge by the way, and does many other things which do not directly set him forward, yet they are all subservient to his journey, or in prosecution of it; or at least no wilful deviations from it. Thus it should be with us, while we are sojourning in this world; our fixed aim and design should be to get to heaven, and thither we should be continually tending in our desires and endeavours.

Heart.

A smith that undertakes to make a key to open such a lock that is out of order, must of necessity first know all the wards, else he may make a key that will not fit; he may endeavour, but not be able, to turn the lock. Thus it is, that whereas there are in the heart of man so many windings, so many turnings, such a labyrinth, such a depth in it, that in the eye of human reason there's no possibility to find out the bottom thereof; how then is it to be imagined that the most knowing, quick-sighted man should be able fully to persuade the heart? He cannot, that's peculiar to God only; he is that great Omnipresent, that only knows all the inwards, all the secret passages, all the cunning contrivances, and the cross-wards of the heart: to him belongeth that especial key of David; it is he that can best unlock the heart, answer all objections, turn all the wheels of the soul, suit and fit the heart with such arguments as shall be effectual to persuasion.—SPENCER.

Alexander, on a time, having many philosophers with him at a banquet, would needs have it put to the question, what was the greatest thing in the world. Some of them said, the hill Olympus, some the sun, some the earth, some one thing and some another; but one of them said, that surely the heart of man must needs be the greatest, because that in a moment it passed through the whole world, heaven, earth, sea, and all. Such is the heart of every worldly-minded man, though, in the substance of it, such a bit as will hardly give a kite a breakfast, yet of that extent as to the desires thereof, that the whole world is not able to satisfy it. If an earthly-minded man should gain unto himself the whole world, and being placed in the middle of it, so that, if possible, he might at once view his purchase, he would, Alexander like, ask whether there were any more worlds, any more land, any more wealth, that he might grasp that into his hands also.—IBID.

Shall we compare the garden to the heart of man? the flowers to christian virtues and graces, the weeds to corruptions? The weed springeth of itself, but the flower must be sown by the gardener, and tended by his care. Some flowers require more care than others; they are brought from countries afar off, from brighter skies and more genial soils, and require all the vigilance and tenderness of the gardener, lest they be blighted by our colder winds, or starved by our ungenial ground.

Sin is the weed that springeth of itself in the human heart; “for out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies,” But virtue and godliness must be planted there by the holy Spirit. Some virtues are of a more difficult growth than others; of a more heavenly nature, and asking a more constant care; such are spirituality of mind, resignation of will, rejoicing in tribulation, and most beautiful, most delicate, most rare of all, most shy in flowering, most easily blighted—humility.

Christianity carries the heart in a just equipoise: when earthly things come, they come, they are welcomed without too much joy; and when they go, they part without tears. We may like these earthly favours; we must take heed of being in love, with them; for love, of whatsoever kind it be, is not without the power of assimilation; if we love the world, we cannot but be worldly-minded. Contrarily, if we love God, we are made partakers of the divine nature, and we are such as we affect. If we be Christians in earnest, certainly the inner room of our hearts, where is the holy of holies, is reserved for the Almighty; the outer courts may be for the common resort of lawful cares and desires, they may come and go; but our God shall have his fixed habitation here for ever.

The heart of an obdurate sinner may very properly be called his sepulchre, which by means of a long habit of sin is shut and closed up against grace, as it were by a hard and heavy stone, and in which there is nothing but darkness and corruption. It is a very great and extraordinary mercy

when the deliverer comes to this prison, where the light shines in this darkness, and holiness itself visits this corruption.—THE PORTFOLIO.

There are some soils so shallow, and wanting in mould, and have so little depth, that while they are suited to bring forth flowers, bear but an imperfect crop of fruit : so there is much ground in the hearts of many, which, while it can bring forth the glittering leaves of a showy profession, yet bears no good fruit, or very sparingly.

As the virtue of a strong spirituous liquor evaporates by degrees in a bottle which is not closely stopped, in like manner the life and power of the Spirit insensibly vanishes away, if the heart is not “kept with all diligence.”

As a thing is said to be pure though it may have some dross cleaving to it, as is pure gold when it is digged out of the mine, though there be much dross in it ; and we say it is pure air though for a time there be fogs and mists within it ; and it is pure water though there may be some mud at the bottom ; a man may be said to have a pure heart though there be a cleaving of much dross to it. Holy men have a fountain of original corruption in them, and from this fountain sins arise continually, as the scum in the pot ; but as in wine, or honey, or water, though the scum arise, yet still it purifieth itself, and casts it out ; contrarily in men of impure hearts the scum ariseth, but it seeths it. Ezek. xxiv. 12. *She wearied herself with lies, and her great scum went not forth out of her.* Holy men have their scum arising in their hearts, as well as the wicked ; but here is the difference, wicked men’s scum seeths in, and mingles together, but men of pure heart have a cleansing and purifying disposition, that casts out whatever evil comes, though it be continually rising ; though it be many times mired he still washeth himself again, he cannot endure it, he doth not, as the swine, delight in it. But notwithstanding this boiling out of evil he is a man of a pure heart ; yet may sin cleave to a man as dross doth to the silver, but it mingles not with the regenerate part, nor that mingles with it no more than oil and water do, which though they touch they do not mingle together.

The human heart is like a ship in the midst of the sea, which is exposed to the perils of the winds and the waves on every side, and made, as it were, their sport. For as the ship is suddenly assaulted, so trouble, and the fear of future evil, like a sudden tempest, assault and disarm our minds ; and then flow in cowardice of spirit and sorrow of heart, which, like the waves, run over us and threaten to overwhelm us every moment. By-and-bye, again, the confidence inspired by prosperity carries us up to heaven in full sail ; and then, security under our present prospects dashes unexpectedly our ship against a rock. These, I say, and the numberless other evils and perils of this life, tend to arouse and stir up the saints, and teach and bring them to sigh and groan from the recesses within ; to pour out their whole hearts, and cry with their whole souls unto heaven.

Thy corrupt heart is like an ant's nest, on which, while the stone lieth, none of them appear ; but take off the stone, and stir them up but with the point of a straw, you will see what a swarm is there, and how lively they be. Just such a sight would thy heart afford thee, did the Lord but withdraw the restraint he has laid upon it, and suffer Satan to stir it up by temptation.

If I wished to destroy an idol temple, I would not begin by stripping off some of its gew-gaw ornaments, but strike at once at the foundation. It is alike useless to endeavour to detach worldly men from the pleasures and vain amusements with which they glorify their idol the world ; we must overthrow the strong foundation of nature's corruptions.

You have a very tender and valuable plant, perhaps the gift of some deceased friend whom you loved while on earth, and whose memory you still cherish ; you water your little plant, and watch it daily through the summer months, as it blooms in your garden ; and as the winter approaches you say, " My plant is too tender to remain out of doors, it must be brought into the house." It is brought in, and placed by the window which admits a strong and blighting wind, but you cease to water it, to cut off the dead leaves, or to care for it, in any other way, because you say, " now it is

in the house, it needs no more care, the cold wind may blow over the little plant, but so long as it is not really out of doors it does not matter." I think common sense would predict that the little tender plant would not live long under such circumstances. So it is with those mistaken persons who think they need no longer "keep their hearts with all diligence," when they are professedly under the influence of godly companionship; and if the little plant of faith there does not wither, it is because some kind friend, after a time, takes the pruning knife, and may-be has to cut away much that is useless and corrupt, till, after a long season of languor bordering on decay, it at length revives and blossoms. The friend of sinners, he only who has power to give life to that little tender plant, and to place it in the heart of the believer; "he purgeth it that it may bring forth more fruit."

My parish, as well as my heart, very much resembles the garden of the sluggard; and what is worse, I find that most of my desires for the melioration of both proceed either from pride, or vanity, or indolence. I look at the weeds which overspread my garden, and breathe out an earnest wish that they were eradicated. But why? What prompts the wish? It may be that I walk out and say to myself, "In what fine order is my garden kept!" This is pride. Or it may be that my neighbours may look over the wall and say, "How finely your garden flourishes!" This is vanity. Or I may wish for the destruction of the weeds, because I am weary of pulling them up. This is indolence. Yet from such sources, I fear, do most of my desires for personal holiness, and for the progress of religion in my society, proceed.

When a clock within is disordered, and the wheels out of frame, the hammer and bell must needs give an uncertain sound; so when our hearts are inwardly disordered, and corrupted with worldliness and profaneness, our speech outwardly accordeth with them. The doorkeeper said unto Peter, "Thou art surely a Galilean, thy speech bewrayeth thee." And whosoever he be that hath his mind taken up, and chiefly delighted, with the world's music, hath his tongue also tuned to the same key, and taketh his joy and comfort

in speaking of nothing else but the world and worldly things; if the world be in his heart, it will break out at the *lips*. A worldly-minded man will proclaim the disorder and confusion within, and speak of little else but worldly things.—SPENCER.

Master Camden reports of one Redwald, king of the East Saxons, the first prince of this nation that was baptized, that in the same church he had one altar for the christian religion, another for that of the heathens. And many such false worshippers of God there are to be found amongst us, such as divide the rooms of their souls betwixt God and the devil, that swear by God and Malcan; that sometimes pray, and sometimes curse, that halt betwixt God and Baal; mere heteroclitites in religion: but God cannot endure this division, he will not have thy threshold; he will have all thy heart, he cares not for half of it, if the devil have the other.—IBID.

It is no matter what is the sign, though an angel, that hangs without, if the devil and sin dwell within. New trimmings upon an old garment will not make it new, only give it a new appearance; and truly it is no good husbandry to bestow a great deal of cost in fining up an old suit, that will soon drop to tatters and rags, when a little more might purchase a new one that is lasting. And is it not better to labour to get a new heart, that all thou dost may be accepted, and thou saved, than to lose all the pains thou takest in religion, and thyself also for want of it?—IBID.

Indeed, by nature, man's heart is a very divided, broken thing, scattered and parcelled out, a piece to this creature, and a piece to that lust. One while this vanity hires him, (as Leah did Jacob of Rachel,) anon when he hath done some drudgery for that, he lets out himself to another: thus divided is man and his affections. Now the elect, whom God hath decreed to be vessels of honour, consecrated for his holy use and service, he throws into the fire of his word, that being there softened and melted, he may by his transforming Spirit cast them anew, as it were, into a holy oneness; so that he who before was divided from God, and lost among the creatures, and his lusts; that shared him among them,

now, his heart is gathered into God from them all; it looks with a single eye on God, and acts for him in all that he doth: if therefore thou wouldest know whether thy heart be sincere, inquire whether it be thus made anew.

That is the pure metalled sword which bends this way, and that way, but returns to its straightness again, and continues not bent. So that man's heart is in the right state, and hath heaven's stamp upon it, which can stoop and bend to the lowest action of his worldly calling, but then returns to its fitness for communion with God, and his heart stands not bent to the creature, but in a direct line to God and his worship.

The heart is untrusty, unruly, and obvious to be surprised. Untrusty, deceitful above all things; therefore we must deal with it as with an untrusty and pilfering servant, and watch over it with a zealous and suspicious eye. It is an unruly thing, if it be once lost, a man cannot recover it again without much time and labour. For it is like unto a wild horse, if the bridle be once let go he will begone and not gotten again in haste, yea, it may be we shall be forced to spend as much time in recovering him as would have served to have despatched our whole journey: so if the bridle of watchfulness be once let go, and our hearts let loose, they will not easily be regained; it will ask no small time to temper and turn them again for the service of God. And it is continually liable to be surprised; like a city every moment liable both to inward commotion and outward assault. As those who keep a city, attempted or besieged by an enemy, have special care of the gates and posterns where the enemy may get in; so must we in the guard of the heart watch especially over the gates and windows of the soul, the *senses*. And as those who keep and defend a city make much of such as are faithful, trusty, and serviceable, and if any such come, will entertain and welcome them with all kindness, but one whom they suspect as a traitor, or the enemy's party, they presently cut short as soon as they discover him; so must we make exceeding much of those good motions put into our heart by God's Spirit, however occasioned: these are our heart's friends, we must cherish, increase, and improve

them to the utmost with meditation, prayer, and practice. But, on the other hand, we must crush every thought that is inimical at its first rising. "Keep thy heart with all diligence;" [Heb. above all keeping.]

The poets feign that when Jupiter had made man, and was delighted with his own beauteous fabric, he asked Momus what fault he could espy in that curious piece? What out of square, or worthy blame? Momus commended the proportion, the complexion, the disposition of the lineaments, the correspondence and dependence of the parts, and in a word, the symmetry and harmony of the whole; he would see him go, and liked the motion; he would hear him speak, and praised his voice and expression; but at last he spied a fault, and asked Jupiter whereabouts his heart lay. Jupiter told him, within a secret chamber, like a queen in her privy lodging, whither they that come must first pass the great chamber, and the presence, there being a court of guard forces and fortifications to save it, shadows to hide it, that it might not be visible. There, there is the fault, (saith Momus,) thou hast forgotten to make a window into this chamber, that men might look in and see what the heart is doing, and whether the recorder, the tongue, do agree with his meaning. Thus man is the masterpiece of God's creation, exquisitely and wonderfully made, but his heart is close and deceitful above all things; had he but a glass window in his heart, how would the black devices which are contrived, appear palpably odious, how would the coals of festering malice be seen to blister the tongue and scald the lips of them that imagine mischief in their hearts: then it would be seen how they pack and shuffle, cut and deal too; but it is a poor game to the innocent: in the mean time, let all such know that the privy chamber of the heart hath a window to God's, though not to men's nor angels' inspection.—SPENCER.

Holiness.

We find persons acquainted with the fundamental doctrines of religion, and we are glad. But a year afterwards we converse with them again, and find them just the same. Two years elapse, and we come into contact with them again, but still no progress can be perceived, till at length the sight of them reminds us of a piece of wood-work carved in the form of a tree, rather than a living production of nature; for there are no fresh shoots, nor any new foliage to be seen: on the contrary, the very same modes of speech, the same views and sentiments upon every point, and the same limited sphere of spiritual conception; no enlarged expansion of the inward horizon; not a single addition to the treasury of christian knowledge.

When courtiers come down into the country, the common home-bred people possibly think their habits strange; but they care not for that, it is the fashion at court. What need, then, have the godly to be so tender foreheaded, to be out of countenance because the world looks on holiness as a singularity? It is the only fashion in the highest court, yea, of the King of kings himself.

The church, assailed by her enemies on every side, should unite, and put on her armour, remembering that our breast-plate is righteousness, in which we must shine before men, and conquer them—"the weapons of our warfare are not carnal." Thus, the armies of Rome, by dazzling the eyes of their opponents with the splendour of their polished breast-plates, often awed them to surrender without drawing a sword.

In a believer there is an inclination and propensity to a godly life. God has created all creatures with an inclination to their proper operations. Every created thing has a fitness and an aptitude for that use to which it serveth, the water to flow, the air to be carried to and fro. So the new creature has a tendency to those actions which are proper to its state; as the sparks fly upwards, and the stone falleth

downwards from an inclination of nature, so are their hearts bent to please God, and to serve him, and what they do therein they do with a kind of naturalness, because of this bent and inclination. The law is in their hearts. Ps. xl. 8. There is a purpose there. Acts xi. 23; see Exod. xxxv. 29. There is some weight and poise within their hearts to carry them towards God, and the duties that concern his glory and service. But an unregenerate man may act from a violent impression contrary to nature, as a stone moves upwards, or a bowl thrown with great strength where the natural bias is overruled. So a wicked man may do a good action or two, as Saul forced himself, and Herod, but the bent and natural inclination is another way. 'Tis important to attend to the first principle of our motions, whether it be natural or violent, whether our spirit makes us willing, or we are acted on by something foreign.

Hast thou seen the pure lake, smooth and unruffled: how clearly doth it reflect the bright heavens above, with every little fleecy cloud that floateth thereon! Hast thou seen the same lake when ruffled by the wind? Or hast thou disturbed the sleeping waters with a stone, so that circle after circle hath spread along upon the surface? How was the bright picture,—the blue heaven, and the fleecy cloud,—bedimmed and broken! That lake, methinks, is the emblem of the renewed soul, which, in the peaceful hours of retirement and prayer, hath something of a better heaven impressed upon it. Alas! when ruffled by earthly passions, when disturbed by the business and vanity of the world, how is the fair vision broken, the fervour, and the divine light, and the holy sweetness gone! My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the Lord. Ps. civ. 34. My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer. Ps. xlv. 1. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. Ps. cxix. 113.

The progress of holiness is sometimes like the lengthening of daylight, after the days are past the shortest. The difference is for some time imperceptible, but still is real; and in due season becomes undeniably visible.

“Holiness, as I then wrote down some of my contemplations on it, appeared to me to be of a sweet, pleasant, charming, serene, calm nature ; which brought an inexpressible purity, brightness, peacefulness, and ravishment to the soul. In other words, that it made the soul like a field or garden of God, with all manner of pleasant flowers and fruits ; all pleasant, delightful, and undisturbed ; enjoying a sweet calm, and the gentle vivifying beams of the sun. The soul of a true Christian, as I then wrote my meditations, appeared like such a little white flower as we see in the spring of the year : low, and humble on the ground, opening its bosom to receive the pleasant beams of the sun’s glory ; rejoicing, as it were, in a calm rapture ; diffusing around a sweet fragrance ; standing peacefully and lovingly in the midst of other flowers round about ; all in like manner opening their bosoms to drink in the light of the sun. There was no part of creature holiness that I had so great a sense of its loveliness as humility, brokenness of heart, and poverty of spirit ; and there was nothing that I so earnestly longed for. My heart panted after this,—to be before God, as in the dust ; that I might be as nothing, and that God might be ALL ; that I might become a little child.”—J. EDWARDS.

When the soul is, in good measure, freed from the rackings and tortures that naturally accompany the habitual contrariety of an ungovernable heart to a convinced judgment and conscience, it is no longer held in pain by such continual self-upbraidings ; “Thou art, and affectest to be, what thou knowest thou shouldest not ; and neither art, nor dost, nor canst, desire or endure to be, or do, what thou very well knowest thou shouldest :” in this case the soul is throughout disjointed, and continually grating upon itself. And the ease and pleasure which it finds by this happy change much resembles that which a man’s body, being in such a case, feels when every dislocated bone is brought back, and well settled in its proper place and order again. Before this the man was in pain and continual disquietude. The body could not perform its proper functions, and instead of ease, aptness for motion, and pleasurable emotions, every turn and movement was forced, constrained, and con-

trary to the graceful ease of nature. So great is also the difference of the soul again restored to health from its former disordered condition.

When a small scion is grafted into a tree, a stream of sap and juice begins to flow from the stock into the branch which has been grafted in, till at length it shall blossom and bud, and bring forth fruit ; it partakes at once both of the root and fatness of the tree. Precisely as the sap flows from the stock into the branch which has been grafted in, so does one continued stream of fruitfulness flow from the Saviour to the souls of those who are really united to him, and who are branches abiding in him. Christ is made sanctification, 1 Cor. i. 30.—FREDERIC TRENCH.

Sanctification is gradual, a mighty oak riseth out of an acorn—it is with a Christian as it was with Christ, who sprung out of the dead stock of Jesse, out of David's family when at lowest, but he grew up higher than the heavens. Be careful to live under the influence of Christ the Sun of Righteousness. If creation cannot be cold under the full shining beams of the sun, till the light and heat of the sun be extinguished, God will never put out a dim candle that was lighted at the Sun of Righteousness. Samson, being a Nazarite, when shaved, "the crown is fallen from his head, and woe unto him, for he hath sinned." Let us be careful to watch against fleshly lusts, and preserve our purity ; for all our glory is gone, and our defence departed from us, when the covenant of our separation to God as spiritual Nazarites is profaned.

If a beam of the sun fall upon a looking-glass, it not only makes it glitter, but represents the very image of the sun in the glass ; but though it fall ever so strongly on a mud wall, though it enlighten, it does not leave its image there : so saving light does not only irradiate, but transform and sanctify.

What a treasure is a devoted mind ! Whatever was touched by the anointed priest became consecrated to the service of the sanctuary. Some drops of the precious anointing oil would perfume all it fell upon. Has not the Saviour touched my soul ? Have not I felt sweet constraining

energy emanate from him to my whole nature? May all perceive the fragrance of holiness going forth from me!—
EAST.

The image of God, in the creature, is holiness. Power is his hand and arm. Omniscience his eye. Mercy his bowels. Eternity his habitation and resting-place; but holiness is his glorious beauty. This David desired to see. His justice is part of his holiness, whereby he reduces into order those things which are out of order. It is the crown of all his attributes; the life of all his decrees; the brightness of all his actions.

The character of professing Christians ought to be such as to leave no doubt in the minds of any who witness it, as to the moral perfections of that being who has “formed them for himself, that they might show forth his praise.” You should say to such as profess to be “in Christ Jesus”—to be “new creatures:”—“Do you bear, then, the impress of the Divine image? Is it distinctly marked and visible in you? Are the great features of your heavenly Father’s character so clearly apparent,—the family likeness so prominent and well defined,—that your relation to him as his children cannot fail to be recognised and acknowledged? O remember of what consequence it is that no feature of it should be distorted:—that all should be in harmony with the portraiture drawn in the divine word. Remember, that everything about you that accords not with that portraiture carries with it a reflection against the great head of the family. Everything unseemly, every spot of defilement, every word, and every action inconsistent with the holiness of Christian deportment, is a blot in the escutcheon of the “household of faith,” and a dishonour to its divine Father and Lord. Think of the character of the Lord, of him whose people you profess to be, and who is “not ashamed to call you brethren.”

The watch is naught that goes only at first winding up, and stands all the day after; and so is that heart that desires not always to keep in spiritual motion. I confess there may be a great difference in the standing of two watches; one from the very watch itself, because it hath

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not the right make, and this will ever do so till altered ; another possibly is true work, only some dust clogs the wheels, or a fall hath a little battered it, which removed, it will go well again. And there is as great difference between the sincere soul and hypocrite in this case ; the sincere soul may be interrupted in its spiritual motion and christian course, but it is from some temptation that at present clogs him ; but he hath a new nature which inclines to a constant motion in holiness, and doth, upon removing the present impediment, return to its natural exercise of godliness ; but the hypocrite fails in the very constitution and frame of his spirit ; he hath not a principle of grace in him to keep him moving. Like an ill-made watch, he must first be taken all to pieces.

It is not place, but the adaptation of our nature to the circumstances by which we are surrounded, that produces that harmony from which results satisfaction. If a man walks out amidst the beauties of a summer's landscape, he is refreshed with the universal verdure, and cheered with the glories of the sun lighting hill and dale, and the surrounding scenery—here are appropriate objects to administer delight to vision. So, when the other bodily senses find materials corresponding with the exercise of their functions, nature is gratified. On the contrary, if a creature is totally removed out of its natural element, distress and pain must ensue, because every source and inlet for enjoyment is closed. There are senses and appetites, but no materials to administer to their wants. It is precisely thus with the constitution of the mind. Its tastes and feelings are marked and defined, and have their precise limits. If pleasing objects suited to them are present to call them into exercise, the effect of the union is the highest satisfaction—withdraw them, and you have the faculties of the soul paralysed for all enjoyment, from want of adaptation from the surrounding scene. In a word, there must be faculties to embrace, and objects to satisfy, before content and satisfaction can ensue. Well, then, might our Lord announce that “except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of heaven.” The soul only that is renewed, has the faculties of enjoyment, and

happiness in the spiritual state ; what beauty is to the eye, or music to the ear, such is spirituality to the renewed soul ; and therefore the vital qualifications required in order to an admission into the glory of heaven, are not a mere arbitrary institution, but founded in the nature of things, and the unchangeable nature of God. Either God or the sinful soul must change its nature before there can be happiness. If there were any defect and irregularity in the architecture of the visible world, in the frame and order of its parts, it were less dishonourable than if there were no connexion between a holy life and blessedness: for the first would only reflect upon his wisdom and power, but the other would asperse his holiness and justice, the highest perfections of the Deity.

Humility.

Saints increase in humility as they draw nearer to heaven. "Unworthy to be called an apostle," said Paul, concerning himself, some years after his conversion. As he advanced still farther in years, he cried out, "Less than the least of all saints." A little before his martyrdom, his cry is, "The chief of sinners."

The nettle mounteth on high ; while the violet shrouds itself under its own leaves, and is chiefly found out by its fragrancy. Let Christians be satisfied with the honour that cometh from God only.

Generally speaking, those that have the most grace, and the greatest gifts, and are of the greatest usefulness, are the most humble, and think the most meanly of themselves. So those boughs and branches of trees which are most richly laden with fruit, bend downwards, and hang lowest.

Many a poor man makes a bright Christian ; God keeps him humble that he may dwell in his heart, and that the beams of his grace may shine in his heart. See yon evening star, how bright it shines, how pure and steady are its

rays ; but look, it is lower in the heavens than those stars which sparkle with a restless twinkling in the higher region of the skies. God keeps you low, that you may shine bright.

The lowliness of the Christian has nothing in it mean, low, or degrading. It is a lowliness born of glorious parentage, growing not like a sickly weed in a muddy pool from whence it derives its nourishment, but like some fresh and little herb upon the mountain's brow, unnoticed by the traveller who has gained the ascent, and yet a plant rejoicing in the light of heaven, cherished by its sunbeams and fresh and balmy airs, and daily nourished by its pure and shining dew. It has no enjoyment, or even existence, in low and degrading attachments, but it delights to lean meekly and confidently upon his love, "who dwelleth not only in the high and holy place, but with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones."

Spectacles that are of an ancient sight, if the young go about to use them, they show all things less than they are ; but unto old men they present all things greater than they are. Such is the difference betwixt pride and humility, that pride is like the old man's spectacles, and makes things bigger than indeed they are ; but humility, like the spectacles worn by young men, causeth everything to seem less than it is ; a proud man thinks no man better than himself, an humble none worse ; the one lifteth up himself on high, the other layeth his mouth in the dust.—Lament. iii. 29.—SPENCER.

Where do the rivers run that fertilise our soil—is it on the top of yonder hill? No! in the vales beneath. If you would have "the river whose streams make glad the city of our God" to run through your hearts, and enrich them to his glory, you must abide in the vale of humility.

Lowliness of heart, and a sense of our own emptiness, is that which makes us always have recourse to our fountain, and keep in favour with our head, from whom we must receive fresh supplies of strength for doing any good, for bearing any evil, for resisting any temptation, for overcom-

ing any enemy, for beginning, for continuing, for perfecting any duty. For though it be man's heart that does these things, yet it is by a foreign and impressed strength ; as it is iron that burns, but not by its own nature, which is cold, but by the heat which it has received from the fire. " It is not I, (says the apostle,) but the grace of God which was with me."

A man upon the top of one hill may seem very near the top of another, and yet he must descend from the one before he can possibly reach the other. So a man on the mount of self-conceit or self-righteousness, may suppose himself as good as on the hill of God—a step, and he is there ; but he *must* descend, and passing the vale of humility and self-renunciation, ascend the hill of salvation by faith in Christ Jesus, or he will never enter the New Jerusalem.

Where there is little grace, *there* will ever be much of self-complacency mixed up with all our good works. We shall be in continual danger of self-elation, like the light bark which is tossed on the top of every wave ; but as we gain experience, humility will afford a true ballast for the soul. It is the little ear of corn, which we sometimes see in the wheat-field, which holdeth up its head straight and erect because it has little in it, while the heavy ear droppeth its head and hangeth downward. So the tree tosses aloft its light empty branches, but its boughs which are laden with fruit are bowed down. The Spirit of God indeed beareth witness to the reality of grace in the believer's heart, but suffereth him not to rest in his own grace ; there is so much at least of partial defect as to cause us to lie lower at the feet of Jesus, and lay our mouths in the dust.

As portrayed by Christ, on entering his evangelical church, it is a little child to whom belief is natural, an emblem of candour, simplicity, and faith ; when hearing his word, it sits at his feet, and is all docility and attention ; in entering the presence of God it throws itself prostrate, or smites on its breast, and dares not lift up so much as an eye to heaven ; when it is free to take the highest seat in the assembly, it voluntarily selects the lowest, and is taken by

surprise if called up higher; in the presence of superior excellence, it is praise and imitation; associated with fellow-Christians, it is willing subordination, emulous of no distinction, but that which arises from pre-eminent service: it declines to be called "master," and lays all its honours at the Saviour's feet; and when at length he shall ascend his throne, and enumerate its godlike deeds, he describes it as filled with self-abasement, even there, and diffident of receiving his divine award.—HARRIS.

Hypocrisy.

There is sometimes, on trees and flowers, what florists call a false blossom. How many such do we see in the world of professing Christians!

Different members of the body have different offices; and are, some, of greater, others of less importance, but they all belong to the body. Hypocrites are not real members, but excrescences of the church, like falling hair, or the parings of the nails.

A very capital painter, in London, exhibited a piece representing a friar habited in his canonicals. View the painting at a distance, and you would think the friar to be in a praying attitude: his hands are clasped together, and held horizontally to his breast; his eyes meekly demissed, like those of the publican in the gospel: and the good man appears to be quite absorbed in humble adoration and devout recollection. But take a nearer survey, and the deception vanishes; the book which seemed to lie before him, is discovered to be a punchbowl, into which the wretch is, all the while, in reality only squeezing a lemon. How lively a representation of an hypocrite!

The emperor Frederick the Third, who when one said unto him, he would go and find some place where no hypocrites inhabited; he told him, "He must travel there far

enough, beyond the Sauromatæ, or the Frozen Ocean; and yet when he came there, he should find an hypocrite, if he found himself there." And it is true that every man is an hypocrite. Hypocrisy is a lesson that every man readily takes out; it continues with age, it appears with infancy, the wise and learned practise it, the duller and more rude attain unto it. All are not fit for the wars; learning must have the picked and choicest wits; arts must have leisure and pains; but all sorts are apt enough, and thrive in the mystery of dissimulation; the whole throng of mankind, the whole world, is but a shop of counterfeit wares, a theatre of hypocritical disguises. Grace is the only antidote.—
SPENCER.

As a man can have very small comfort, to be thought by the world to be rich, because he hath a shop full of wares and driveth a great trade, when, in the mean time, he knows, poor man, that he is worse than nothing, and oweth much more than he is worth; or because he maketh a counterfeit show of rich wares, when he has nothing but empty boxes with false inscriptions: so is it with all those that seem to be religious, that make a goodly show of godliness, yet in the mean time are very bankrupts in grace, and like one of Solomon's fools that boast themselves of great riches, when they are indeed exceeding poor. Why do they so? What get they by it? What comfort reap they by it? None at all, their consciences bearing them witness that they are none such as the world takes them to be.

There can be no difference betwixt a gliding star and the rest; the light seems alike, both while it stood and when it fell; but being once fallen, it is known to be no other than a base shiny meteor; and now a man may tread upon that with his foot, which before his eye admired: had it been a star, it had still and ever shined; now the very fall argues it a false apparition. Thus our charity doth, and must, mislead us in our spiritual judgments; if we see men exalted in their christian profession, shining with appearances and out-sides of grace, we may not think them other than stars in this lower firmament; but if they fall from their holy station, and embrace this present world, whether in judgment or

practice, renouncing the truth and power of godliness, we may then conclude that they never had any true light in them, and were no other than a glittering composition of pride and hypocrisy.—SPENCER.

There are a sort of men that call themselves Christians, profess that they know God, and that their hope is in heaven; but no sooner doth any vanity come in the way, any temporal commodity present itself, but their hearts quickly betray where their treasure is. Just like the juggler's ape of Alexandria, which being attired like a reasonable creature, and dancing curiously to his master's instrument, deceived all the spectators, until one, spying the fraud, threw a handful of dates upon the stage, which the ape no sooner espied, but he tore all his vizard, and fell to his victuals, to the scorn of his master; which gave an occasion to the proverb, *an ape is an ape, though he be clad ever so gaily*. And most sure it is, that an hypocrite will at last show himself an hypocrite, for all his specious show and goodly pretences.—IBID.

Counterfeit diamonds may sparkle and glisten, and make a great show for some time, but their lustre will not last long; an apple, if it be rotten at the core, though it has a fair and shining outside, yet rottenness will not stay long, but will taint the outside also. It is the nature of things unsound, that the corruption stays not where it began, but putrefieth and corrupteth more and more till all be alike. Thus it is that sincerity tells the Christian, nothing counterfeit will last long, and that man that hath a rotten heart towards God, his want of sincerity will in time be discovered, and his outside be made as rotten as his inside. Fraud and guile cannot go long unspied, dissembling will not always be dissembled, and hypocrisy will discover itself in the end.—IBID.

If God himself find not out the hypocrite, he will not bewray himself. I cannot set out the different disposition of the sincere and false heart in this matter, better than by the like in a mercenary servant, and a child: when a servant (except it be one of a thousand) breaks a glass, or spoils any of his master's goods, all his care is to hide it from his master, and therefore he throws the pieces away into some dark

hole or corner, where he thinks they shall never be found ; and now he is not troubled for the wrong he hath done his master, but glad that he hath handled the matter so as not to be discovered. Thus the hypocrite would count himself a happy man, could he but lay his sin out of God's sight ; it is not the treason that he dislikes, but fears to be known that he is a traitor ; and therefore, though it be as impossible to blind the eye of the Almighty, as with our hand to cover the face of the sun, that it should not shine, yet the hypocrite will attempt it. We find a woe pronounced against such. (Isa. xxxi. 15.) "Woe to them that dig deep to hide their counsel from the Lord."

Truly the hypocrite doth more hurt when he is discovered, which is the death of his profession, than when he seemed to be alive. The wicked worldlings that are not long seeking a staff to beat the saints with, have now one put into their hands by the hypocrite. O how they can run division upon this harsh note, and besmear the face of all professors with the dirt they see upon one false brother's coat ; as if they could take the length of all their feet by the measure of one hypocrite. Hence comes such language as this—there is not one better than another : indeed this is very absurd reasoning, as if one should say, no good coin were current, and right silver, because now and then a brass shilling is found among the rest. But this language fits the mouth of an ungodly world ; and woe be to the man that makes these arrows for them by his hypocrisy which they shoot against the saints. Better he had been thrown with a millstone about his neck into the sea, than have lived to have given such an occasion to the enemy to blaspheme.

Fevers are counted malignant according to the degree of putrefaction that is in them. Hypocrisy is the very putrefaction and rottenness of the heart ; the more of this putrid stuff there is in any sin, the more malignant it is. David speaks of the *iniquity* of his sin. (Psa. xxxii. 5.) "I acknowledge my sin unto thee, and my iniquity have I not hid ; I said I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord, and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin."

Lusts (as to the actings, I mean) are like agues ; the fit is

not always on, and yet the man not rid of his disease; and some men's lusts, like some agues, have not such quick returns as others. The river doth not move always one way; now 'tis coming, anon falling water; and though it doth not rise when it falls, yet it hath not lost its other motion. Now the tide of lust is up, anon 'tis down, and the man recoils, and seems to run from it, but it returns again upon him. Who would have thought to have seen Pharaoh in his mad fit again, that should have been with him in his good mode, when he bid Moses and the people go? But, alas! the man was not altered; thus, may be, when a strong occasion comes, this (like an easterly wind to some of our ports) will bring in the tide of thy lusts so strongly, that thy soul, that seemed so clear of thy lust as the naked sands are of water, will be in a few moments covered, and as deep under their waves as ever. But the longer the banks have held the better; yet shouldest thou never more be drunk as to the outward fulfilling of the lust, yet this is not enough to clear thee from being a hypocrite.

Hypocrisy often takes up her lodging next door to sincerity, and so she passes unfound, the soul not suspecting hell can be so near heaven. And as hypocrisy, so is sincerity hard to be discovered; this grace often lies low in the heart, (like the sweet violet in some valley, or near some brook,) hid with thorns and nettles,—infirmities I mean: so that there requires both care and wisdom, that we neither let the weed of hypocrisy stand, nor pluck up the herb of grace in its stead.

Hypocrites make a great business about small matters, and in the mean time neglect weighty duties. They are careful to pay the tithe of mint, and omit the weightier matters. Like one who comes into a shop to make a very small purchase, and steals a costly article—a penny worth to steal a pound's worth; or is punctual in paying a small debt, that he may get deeper into our books, and cheat us of a greater sum; comply in circumstances and terms which yet must have their place, but make no conscience of the greater.

The bat, like the woman with the adulterous eye, watcheth

for the twilight ; Prov. vii. 9 ; such are all hermaphrodite Christians, religious neuters who love the twilight of truth better than the moonlight, whose religion may be very well declined with the article (*hoc*), for it is of the neuter gender ; not much unlike him (in Pliny) whose picture was so ambiguously drawn by Polygnotus Thasius, a cunning painter, that it was doubted whether he had painted him climbing upward or going downward with the shield. And so slily do these antiquaries carry their shield of faith, as the apostle calls it, Eph. vi., that it justly may be doubted whether it be to defend us or our adversaries. They have one foot within the gates of Sion, another within the gates of Babylon ; one within the church of England, another in the open common of dissent ; one wing to fly to us, another to fly from us, upon the least advantage that may be.—SPENCER.

There is mention made of a beast, called by the best translators chamois, by others camel-leopard, a kind of camel that hath a horse's neck, an ox's foot, a camel's head, and is spotted like a panther, or a leopard. Just such are all hypocrites ; they have many shapes wherein to act the part of their deep dissimulation. If you look upon their devotion, they appear to be saints ; in their dealings you shall find them devils ; oracles in their discourse, snares at the board ; heavy censurers of others for slight faults, boasters of their own goodness ; the beating of whose pulse in matters of piety is unequal ; in public actions, hard, strong, and quick ; in private matters, weak, soft, and dull ; shrinking in persecution, for painted faces cannot endure to come nigh the fire.—IBID.

The griffin in the fable, when the battle was to be fought betwixt the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, would partake of neither side, but stood neutral until he could perceive which side did get the best of the day ; and therefore showed his fore part like a fowl unto the birds, and his hinder part like a four-footed beast unto the beasts, thereby to gull them both ; but his deceit being perceived of both, he was hated and rejected of both, as unworthy to be trusted on either side. Thus it fares with the hypocrite, who, being

desirous to serve two masters, and to retain the favour both of God and the world, the devil hates him because he retaineth unto Christ; and Christ hates him much more, because he doth but only retain unto him. The world cannot abide him because he professeth godliness; and God can worse abide him, because he doth but profess it: neither of them doth love him, because he hath been true to neither, nor yet indeed unto himself, but hath betrayed Christ for the world's sake, and the world for Christ's sake, and himself for sin and Satan's sake.—SPENCER.

A poisonous weed may grow as much as the hyssop or rosemary; the poppy in the field as the corn; the crab as the pear-main: but the one hath a harsh sour taste, the other mellows as it grows. Thus an hypocrite may grow in outward dimensions as much as a child of God. He may pray as much, profess as much, but he grows only in magnitude, he brings forth sour grapes, his duties are leavened with pride. The other ripens as he grows; he grows in love, humility, faith, which do mellow and sweeten his duties, and make them come off with a better relish.—IBID.

'Tis the hypocrite that stints himself in the things of God. A little knowledge he would have, that may help him to discourse of religion among the religious; and for more, he leaves it as more fitting for the preacher than himself. Some outward formalities he likes, and makes use of in profession, as attendance on public ordinances; and sins which would be an offence among his neighbours he forbears; but as for pressing into more inward and nearer communion with God in ordinances—labouring to get his heart more spiritual—the whole body of sin more and more mortified—this was never his design. Like some flighty tradesman that never durst look so high as to think of being rich, but thinks it well enough if he can but hold his shop-doors open, and keep himself out of the jail, though with a thousand shifting tricks.

Ignorance.

Darkness is the proper image and metaphor, by which to represent that mental ignorance and delusion under which so many of our species labour. For at midnight all that is fair and beautiful in nature is concealed. There are fields and forests, there are brooks and fountains, there are rivers and valleys, but gloom and confusion rest upon all this loveliness. And, in like manner, as long as a man continues in moral darkness, there is a veil, and there is confusion upon God, and Christ, and heaven, and eternity, and christian privileges, and the objects of faith; these, bright and glorious in their radiance to one who enjoys "the marvellous light," are hid from his eyes.

You have, mayhap, heard of the covetous man that hugged himself in the many bags of gold that he had, but never opened them, nor used them: when the thief took away his gold, and left his bags full of pebbles in their room, he was as happy as when he had the gold, for he looked not of one or the other. And, verily, an ignorant person is, in a manner, no better of truth, than of error, of his side; both are alike to him, all one to a blind man.

The people of Siena, having wilfully rebelled against Charles the Fifth, their emperor, sent their ambassador to excuse it, who, when he could find no other excuse, thought in a jest to put it off thus, "What," saith he, "shall not we of Siena be excused being known to be fools?" To whom the emperor's agent replied, "Even that shall excuse you, but upon the condition which is fit for fools; that is, to be kept and bound in chains." Thus shall it be with those that sit under plentiful means of grace, rich gospel dispensations, so that it is but opening the casements of their hearts, and the light of God's countenance will fully shine upon them; yet remain unfruitful, barren, empty, sapless, lifeless Christians, and think that ignorance shall at last excuse them.—
SPENCER.

If a man should bind his son apprentice to some science or occupation, and when he had served his time should be to seek of his trade, and be never a whit the more his craftsman in the ending of his years than he was at the beginning, he would think he had lost his time, and complain of the injury of the master, or the carelessness of the servant. Or, if a father should put his son to school, and he always should continue on the lowest form, and never get higher, we should judge either great negligence in the master, or in the scholar. Behold such apprentices, or such scholars, are most of us! The church of God is the school of Christ, and the best place to learn the science of all sciences. Now if we have many of us lived long therein, some of us twenty, some thirty, some forty, some fifty years, &c., and some longer, and we no wiser than a child of seven, were it not a great shame for us? what, no forwarder in religion than so? And may we not be condemned of great negligence in the matters of our salvation?—SPENCER.

Image of God.

The mind of a natural man is darkened and disturbed by passion, and, except some occasional feelings of terror, gives no indication of the existence of the Deity. It is like the ocean lying under a threatening sky, and ruffled with the wind, which gives no distinct reflection of the lights of the heavens, yet catches and flashes back an occasional gleam, which indicates their existence. When the soul is restored to the favour of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, it is as when God says to the sea, "Peace, be still," and immediately its fury subsides, and its heaving billows begin to rock themselves to rest, while the clouds gradually disperse, and the sun shines out upon it, and its reflections become more distinct and more general, and the whole scene assumes an air of greater cheerfulness. But when the soul shall be for

ever delivered from the influence of all agitating passions, and shall be brought into the presence of God, it will be as a calm expanse of water lying under a serene sky, with the sun beaming full upon it, which then gleams and sparkles with a brightness that is overpowering to human vision. Then every feature in the majestic and lovely character of God will have its respondent reflection on the souls of his people : and as the untroubled ocean reflects in succession the various exhibitions of the works of God, presented by a revolving and perpetually changing sky, so their souls will be the subjects of ever-varying affections, excited by a continued succession of new and wonderful displays of the character and attributes of the Deity.

In my travels through Syria, on a mountainous ridge my attention was suddenly arrested with a magnificent grove of trees, of the cedar species. They were evidently the growth of many ages, and had obtained the perfection of beauty and grandeur. As I descended into the vale, I beheld a number of other trees stunted in their growth, and as remarkable for their meanness as the former were for their magnificence. The guide assured me they were of the same species. I thought it impossible, not a trace of resemblance could I find in them ; but he assured me that they had been planted by the agency of the winds, and had fallen on that spot. We had not proceeded very far before another group presented itself. These had been planted by the hand of man, and carefully attended to as they grew up. And on examining them, I had no difficulty in discovering the family likeness to the first grove of trees ; they were giving promise of great beauty, and seemed to speak, that if ages were allowed for them to grow up, they would prove no mean rivals of their parent stock. This appears to be a remarkable emblem of the children of fallen Adam. They were "planted a noble vine, but how are they turned into the degenerate plant of a strange vine!" Like the scattered trees in the vale, they are stunted in their growth, mean, despicable, and useless, having lost all resemblance to their parent stock. Instead of the image of God, they have the

likeness of him whose children they are. And like those trees where there is no friendly hand to cultivate them, they will continue for ever in their degenerate and ruined state. But there is also another class, like the newly planted grove, who are brought under cultivation, and under the care and watchfulness of the good husbandman their heavenly Father. These, though still immeasurably inferior to the noble stock from which they were originally taken, are yet again bearing evident marks of their parentage, their high and heavenly original. Every year the family likeness appears more evident and conspicuous, and as "trees of the Lord," "the planting of his right hand," they have the promise that "they shall cast forth their roots as Lebanon; their branches shall spread, and their beauty shall be as the olive tree, and their smell as Lebanon."

The heathens had a notion that the gods would not like the service and sacrifice of any but such as were like themselves. And therefore to the sacrifice of Hercules none were to be admitted that were dwarfs. To the sacrifice of Bacchus, a merry god, none that were sad and pensive; as not suiting their genius. An excellent truth may be drawn from their folly—he that would like and please God must be like God.

"I shall be satisfied," &c. The likeness "after the image of him that created him" must be restored, that man may be once more "satisfied." At present the believer is like the marble in the hands of the sculptor, but though day by day he may give fresh touches, and work the marble into greater emulation of the original, the resemblance will be far from complete until death. Each fresh degree of likeness is a fresh advance towards satisfaction. It must then be that when every feature is moulded into similitude, when all traces of feebleness and depravity are swept away for ever, the statue breathes, and the picture burns with Deity: it must be that *then* we "shall be filled." We shall look on the descending Mediator, and, as though the ardent gaze drew down celestial fire, we shall seem instantly to pass through the refiner's furnace, and leaving behind all the dishonour

of the grave, and all the dross of corruptible humanity, spring upwards, an ethereal, rapid, glowing thing, Christ's image extracted by Christ's lustres.—MELVIL.

The fluid which is about to crystallize does not more certainly assume the form of the crystal inserted into it, than believers modify and accelerate the formation of their character by associating in christian fellowship, and all assimilate to Christ, their common type and centre: according to his prayer, they become "one" in him.

In reference to moral and religious reform, the work must proceed step by step. You may fly in a balloon swiftly through the air, or you may travel rapidly by steam, or by railroads, but in morals and religion you must be content to proceed gradually. Deep-rooted evils, profligate and abandoned habits, are not to be eradicated in a moment, nor are excellent characters to be thrown off instantaneously as a piece of work from a loom, or from the wheel of a machine. The restoration of God's image rather resembles the growing likeness to its beautiful original in the canvass of the artist. At first the outline, and slowly the form and features, of the human face divine appear, though with some confusion; gradually they rise to more distinctness and precision, and the likeness stands confessed. So the Divine Artist, the Holy Spirit, restores the deformed and misshapen soul, and successively imparts to it every moral beauty and perfection of God; and the soul is once more confessedly like God "in knowledge, in righteousness, and true holiness."

"We are changed into the same image." Some people sit for their picture, but the painter cannot put life into the figure which he draws upon the canvass. It is a *dead* representation. But a parent begets a living representation of himself in his son, and Christ draws a living representation of himself on the soul of the believer.

There is an integral perfection of holiness, that is, an entire conjugation of all those sanctifying graces of which the image of God consists. The new creature in its forming is not like the effects of art, but the living productions of nature. A sculptor, in making a statue of marble, finishes the head when the other part is but rude stone. But all

the parts of a child in the womb are gradually formed together till the body is complete. The Holy Spirit, in renewing a man, infuses a universal habit of holiness, that is comprehensive of all the variety of graces to be exercised in the life of a Christian. As the corrupt nature, styled "the old man," is complete in his earthly members, all the lusts of the flesh; thus the divine nature, styled "the new man," is complete in all spiritual graces, and inclines and enables the sanctified to do every good work. They are mixed in their exercise without confusion: as in a chorus, the variety of the voices is harmonious and conspiring: spiritual graces, according to the degrees of their perfection, such is the degree of their union.

If you take a highly polished mirror, it will reflect the perfect image of the object presented to it; but if you strike a violent blow, and dash that mirror into a hundred pieces, it will no longer present the object in its upright and perfect form, but in a thousand grotesque and discordant figures; it will be impossible to gather any resemblance to the figure it before reflected with perfect truth and accuracy. So the divine, but fallen soul once reflected the perfect image of God, though in miniature, for "the beauty of the Lord its God was upon it." Sin, in the hand of Satan, has struck it a tremendous blow, and dashed its perfect form into a hundred pieces, and now, instead of the beautiful image of God, it reflects the likeness of a hundred unseemly discordant passions, all the hideous deformities of the monster Sin, who is incessantly employed in marring the beauteous workmanship of God. There is, however, this difference, no cunning artificer could ever mend the glass, and make it again a reflecting mirror; but when the Divine Architect, who "makes all things new," speaks the word, the restored soul, now made a new creature, again reflects its Maker's image.

Infirmités.

Venus, though so justly admired for her beauty, and celebrated for her lustre, still has her dark side. When this is

turned towards our earth, her rays are no longer beheld, and she herself becomes invisible. As each believer, shine he ever so brightly, is at present sanctified but in part, need we wonder if, on some occasions, the splendour of his gifts and the radiancy of his graces suffer a temporary eclipse? At such times let our candour and forbearance have their perfect work. After a certain period, Venus will emerge from the shade, and beam forth in all the loveliness of her usual lustre; and when the declining saint has his appointed time in darkness, the Lord will again be a light unto him. Happy is that benighted soul, whose faith (for it is the peculiar business of faith's eye to see in the dark) can pierce the gloom; anticipate the return of day; and long for a final proximation to the Sun of Righteousness, in that world of glory, where no more cloud nor darkness shall obscure our view, tarnish our graces, or damp our joys for ever.

Some infirmities discover more good than some seeming beautiful actions; excess of passion in opposing evil, (though not to be justified,) yet showeth a better spirit than a calm temper when there is just cause of being moved. Better it is that the water should run somewhat muddily than not at all. Job had more grace in his distemper than his friends in their seeming wise carriage.

If I cannot *take pleasure in infirmities*, I can sometimes feel the profit of them. I can conceive a king to pardon a rebel, and take him into his family, and then say, "I appoint you for a season to wear a fetter. At a certain season I will send a messenger to knock it off. In the mean time, this fetter will serve to remind you of your state; it may humble you, and restrain you from rambling."

So long as thou art faithful to resist and mourn for infirmities, they rather move God's pity to thee, than wrath against thee. 'Tis one thing for a child employed by his father, willingly or negligently to spoil the work he sets him about; and another, when through natural weakness he fails in the exact doing of it. Should a master bid his servant give him a cup of wine, and he should willingly throw both glass and wine on the ground, he might expect his master's just displeasure; but if, through some unsteadiness

ness, he should, notwithstanding all his care, spill some of it in the bringing, an ingenuous master will rather pity him for his disease, than be angry for the wine that is lost : and did God ever give his servants occasion to think him a hard master? Hath he not promised "that he will spare us, as a father his child that serves him?" From whence come all the apologies which he makes for his people's failings, if not from his merciful heart, interpreting candidly that they proceed rather from their want of skill, than will, power, or desire? "The flesh is weak, but the spirit is willing," (Matt. xxvi. 41,) was his favourable gloss for his disciples' drowsiness in prayer.

Though grace be oppressed, yet it will recover itself. It is indeed sometimes overtopped by temptation, (as a fountain, which, being overflowed by the torrent of a neighbouring river, is covered while the flood lasts, that a man knows not where to find it ; but after those great waters are slid away, the fountain bubbles up as clearly as before,) yet it works all that while under that oppression, though not perceived. It will rise again by virtue of a believer's union with Christ, as a bough bent down by force, yet, by virtue of its union to the body of the tree, will return to its former posture when the force is removed. The sap in the root of a tree, which the coldness of the season hath stripped of its leaves, will, upon the return of the sun, disperse itself, and as it were meet it in the utmost branches, and renew its old acquaintance with it. Shall the divine nature in the soul be outstripped by mere nature in the plants? Grace can never be so extinguished, but there will be some sparks whereby it may be rekindled. The spark of Peter's grace was rekindled again by a look from his Master. Yea, it may, by a secret influence of the Spirit, gather strength to act more vigorously after its emerging from under the present oppression, like the sun more warm in its beams after it hath been obscured by fogs. Peter's love was more vigorous after his recovery. Christ implied it when he acquainted him with his danger—"When thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren." Luke xxii. 32.

A noble vessel, in the year 1800, appeared off the Good-

win sands with signals of distress. She had been for some time making signals for a pilot, and having been observed on shore, a small skiff put off with an experienced one on board. But before it could reach her, she was driven on the sands, and became a wreck. The well-piloted little skiff escaped the dangers, and returned safely to port. So, weakness, upheld by almighty grace, is safe—while the strongest without it must fail. The weakest, fortified by an almighty strength, and under the guidance of the Redeemer, has a power which neither Adam, with all his nature, nor the holy angels, before their confirmation, were ever possessed of. Well, then, the weaker thy grace, the faster let thy dependence be on Christ, and then thou wilt be more secure by that exercise of faith, than by the strongest grace without it. A small vessel managed by a skilful pilot may be preserved in a rough sea, when a stronger left to itself will dash in pieces.

The present is a mixed condition during which the believer feels like a sick man under his recovery, thankful for his deliverance and life; the fears of death have passed away, the poison of disease no longer rages within him; disease has no longer its fatal grasp on its victim, he has shaken it off, but he is very much enfeebled by it—he finds himself still a very weak creature; alas! he is feeling the sad remains of sin, his former complaint, so that he “cannot do the things that he would;” he cannot work as he would, nor enjoy himself as he would; he must still be attentive to the prescriptions of his heavenly Physician, and must wait the day of perfect restoration.

Justification.

Antiquarians set an inestimable value on uniques: i. e. such curiosities of which there is but one or two of a sort in the world. Justification is in the number of the believer's uniques. There is but one justification (properly so called)

in the whole universe: and it equally belongs, through grace, to all the children of God; and the Christian wishes to be viewing it every moment.

Your heart is not the compass Christ saileth by; he will give you leave to sing as you please, but he will not dance to your daft spring. It is not referred to you and your thoughts, what Christ will do with the charters betwixt you and him; your own misbelief has torn them, but he hath the principal in heaven with himself: your thoughts are no part of the new covenant; dreams change not Christ. Doubtings are your sins, but they are Christ's drugs and ingredients that the physician maketh use of for the curing of your pride. In the passing of your bill and your charters, when they went through the Mediator's great seal, and were concluded, faith's advice was not sought: faith hath not a vote beside Christ's merits; blood, blood, dear blood, that came from your cautioner's holy body, maketh that sure work. The use, then, which ye have of faith now (having already closed with Jesus Christ for justification) is, to take out a copy of your pardon; and so ye have peace with God upon the account of Christ: for since faith apprehendeth pardon, but never payeth a penny for it, no marvel that salvation doth not die or live, ebb or flow, with the working of faith. But, because it is your Lord's honour to believe his mercy and his fidelity, it is infinite goodness in our Lord that unbelief giveth a dash to our Lord's glory, and not to our salvation.

We have many sweet and precious promises to cheer our present existence, and enliven the gloom of an untried futurity. But the glorious announcement of a free and full salvation through the merits of the Lord Jesus, imputed to the believer simply through faith in him, eclipses them all. Like the stars in the presence of the sun, they hide their diminished heads, lost in the effulgence of this bright luminary; and as the moon will pour from one end of the heavens to the other, a light which could not be contributed from the whole host of minute studding stars—so it is with this wonderful gift of God's salvation. It sheds a brighter and

wider light than the whole hemisphere of God's love, starred with all his other precious promises, can dispense.

A man is denominated righteous, as a wall may be esteemed red or green. Now that comes to pass two manners of ways; either by the colour inherent and belonging unto the wall itself, or by the same colour in some diaphanous, transparent body, as glass, which, by the beam of the sun shining on the wall, doth externally affect the same as if it were its own, and covers that true inherent colour which it hath of itself. In like manner, by the strict covenant of the law, we ought to be righteous from a righteousness inherent in and performed by ourselves : but in the new covenant of grace we are righteous by the righteousness of Christ, which shineth upon us, and presenteth us in his colour unto the sight of his Father. Here, in both covenants, the righteousness from whence the denomination groweth is the same; namely, the satisfying of the demands of the whole law; but the manner of our right and propriety thereunto is much varied. In the one, we have right unto it by law, because we have done it ourselves; in the other, we have right unto it only by grace and favour, because another man's doing of it is bestowed upon us, and accounted ours.

As the sun by his beams doth not only expel cold, but works heat and fruitfulness also; thus in the justification of a sinner repenting, there is a further reach than the taking away of sin, there is also infusion of grace and virtue into the sinner's heart. The father of the prodigal did not only take off all his son's rags, but put on the best he had, and a ring on his finger; and to say truth, our justification doth not consist only in the taking away of sin, but in the imputation of Christ's righteousness and obedience; for though the act be one, yet for the manner it is twofold; first by privation, secondly, by imputation.—SPENCER.

A gardener offering a rape-root (being the best present the poor man had) to the Duke of Burgundy, was bountifully rewarded by the duke; which his steward observing, thought to make use of his bounty, and presented him with a very fair horse. The duke, being a very wise, discreet man, perceived the project, received the horse, and gave him

nothing for it. Right so will God deal with all merit-mongers, that think by their good works to purchase heaven, which cannot be, the work being finite, the wages infinite; so that merit must needs be a mere fiction, sith there can be no proportion betwixt the work and reward. There is, indeed, mention made of a mercy-seat in the temple, but there was never heard of any school of merit, but in the chapel of antichrist.—SPENCER.

If the king freely, without desert of mine, and at the mediation of another, give me a place about him, and never so much right unto it, yet I am bound, if I will enjoy it, to come unto him, and do the things that the place requirerh. And if he give me several trees growing in his forest, this his gift ties me to be at cost to cut them down, and bring them home, if I will have them; and when I have done all this, I cannot boast that by my coming and service I merited this place; or by my cost in cutting down and carrying home the trees, made myself worthy of the trees, as the Jesuits speak of their works; but only the deed is the way that leads to the fruition of that which is freely given. There cannot be produced a place in all the Scriptures, nor a sentence in all the fathers, which extend our works any further, or make them exceed the latitude of a mere condition, or way whereby to walk to that, which not themselves, but the blood of Christ hath deserved.—IBID.

As robes and a coronet do not constitute a peer, but are ensigns and appendages of his peerage, for the will of the sovereign is the grand efficient cause which elevates a commoner to noble rank; and as the very patent of creation is only an authentic manifesto, not casual, but declarative of the king's pleasure to make him a nobleman: just so, good works do not make us alive to God, nor justify us before him, nor exalt us to the dignity and felicity of peerage: they are but the robes, the coronet, and the manifesto, shining in our lives and conversation, and making evident to all around us that we are, in deed and in truth, chosen to salvation, justified through Christ, and renewed by the Holy Ghost.

Men, in seeking salvation by the works of the law, have

no idea what folly they are guilty of. What should we think of a man, who, when offered an estate which had been purchased at an immense price, should decline accepting it as a gift, and that too by labours which a thousand men are not able to perform: yet that were wisdom when compared with a rejection of salvation through the imputation of Christ's righteousness, seeking it by the works of the law.

Some harbours have bars of sand which lie across the entrance, and prohibit the access of ships at low water. There is a bar, not of sand, but of adamant rock, the bar of divine justice, which lies between a sinner and heaven. Christ's righteousness is the high water that carries a believing sinner over this bar, and transmits him safe to the land of eternal rest. Our own righteousness is the low water which will fail us in our greatest need, and will ever leave us short of the heavenly Canaan.

It is said of the original Indians of Florida, that when they could not pay their debts, they took a short method of settling the account, by knocking their creditors on the head. Sinners in a state of unregeneracy, though partly sensible that they do not keep the law of God, yet think to knock God's justice on the head, by pleading absolute mercy.

Joy.

If our hearts are ever refreshed with spiritual delight, we should be as cautious of an uncalled-for advance into the world, as of exposing an invalid's susceptible frame to a damp or unhealthy atmosphere. Whatever warmth had been kindled in spiritual duties, may be chilled by one moment's unwary rush into an unkindly clime.

Pearls are not gotten but from the bottom of the water; and gold is digged not from the surface, but from the deep entrails of the earth. So the joy of God is not to be found but in the inward recesses of a broken and contrite spirit.

Worldly joys are nothing but spectres and apparitions of pleasures and joys; they are like Jonah's gourd, which wither in a moment; they are like crackling of thorns under a pot, which is soon at an end. Eccl. vii. 6. It makes a loud noise, a great blaze, but as it ariseth and increaseth on a sudden, so the substance of it is thin and vapid, it is a short-lived flame, and leaves nothing behind it; they are deceitful joys which allure, but do not satisfy us, which, under a show of kindness, hurt us, like flowers which conceal bleeding thorns, which rend and tear us, and which in all respects have a greater mixture of troubles and misery than delight; Prov. xiv. 13. But, on the contrary, the joys of a believer are pure, without any mixture of baser alloy; they are the drops and dews of heaven, and clear streams flowing from God, the fountain of all pleasures; they are joys clear from all filth and dregs. Isa. xxv. 6. And in this mountain shall the Lord of Hosts make unto all people a feast of fat things, a feast of wine on the lees, of fat things full of marrow, of wine on the lees well refined.

The Christian has a *fons perennis* within him. He is satisfied from himself. The men of the world borrow all their joy from without. Joy wholly from without is false, precarious, and short. From without it may be gathered, but like gathered flowers, though fair and sweet for a season, it must soon wither and become offensive. Joy from within is like smelling the rose on the tree, it is more sweet and fair, and I must add it is immortal.

There may be the seed of grace where there is not the flower of joy. The earth may want a crop of corn, yet may have a mine of gold within. A Christian may have grace within, though the sweet fruit of joy does not grow. Vessels at sea, which are richly fraught with jewels and spices, may be in the dark and tossed in the storm. David in a state of dejection prays, "Take not thy Holy Spirit from me." "He doth not pray," saith Augustine, "Lord give me thy Spirit;" so that still he had the Spirit of God remaining in him.

With respect to joy in spiritual things, we must distinguish between the sensitive stirring of the affections, and the

solid complacency of the soul. It is possible a child of God may be more sensibly moved by temporal things, as they strike more upon the senses; but the supreme and prevailing delight of the soul is in spiritual things, in the way of God's testimonies. To exemplify this by the contrary affection—as in sorrow, a temporal loss may to sense more stir the affections, as to bodily expression of them, than a spiritual. As the drawing of a tooth, or any present pain, may make us cry out more than the languishing of a consumption, whereas the other may go nearer to the heart and cause a more lasting trouble: so in joy, a man may be pleased with earthly conveniences, and yet his solid esteem is in more spiritual things, as a trifle may provoke laughter more than a solid benefit which accrues to us. Therefore the case is not to be decided by the intensiveness of the sentive expression, so much so as by the application of the soul.

This is the main sting and vexation of the creature alone, without God's more especial sanctification and blessing—that in it a man shall still taste a secret curse which deprives him of that clearness and satisfaction which he looks for from it. False joy, like “the crackling of thorns,” he may find: but still there is some “fly in the ointment,” “some death in the pot,” “some madness in the laughter,” which, in the midst of all, damps and surpriseth the soul with horror and sadness: there are still some secret suggestions and whisperings of a guilty conscience, that through all this Jordan of pleasure a man swims down apace into a dead sea; that all his delights do but carry him the faster into a final judgment. True joy, saith the heavenly man, is not a perfunctory, a floating thing; it is serious and massy, it sinks to the centre of the heart. As in nature, the heavens (we know) are always calm, serene, uniform, undisturbed; they are the clouds and lower regions that thunder and bluster. The sun and stars raise up no fogs so high as that they may imprint any real blot upon the beauty of those purer bodies, or disquiet their constant and regular motions; but, in the lower regions, by reason of their nearness to the earth, they frequently raise up such meteors as often break forth into thunders and tempests. So the more heavenly

the mind is, the more untainted doth it keep itself from the corruptions and temptations of worldly things; the more quiet and composed is it in all estates; but in minds merely sensual, the hotter God's favours shine, and the faster his rain falls upon them, the more fogs are raised, the higher thorns grow up, the more darkness and distractions do shake the soul of such a man. As fire under water, the hotter it burns, the sooner it is extinguished by the over-running of the water; so earthly things raise up such tumultuary and disquiet thoughts in the minds of men, as do at last quite extinguish all the heat and comfort which was expected from them.

There is a language befitting every state and condition. Sorrow and sickness will have its mourning. Health and prosperity call for the voice of praise. When a patient enters an hospital with a sore disease, you do not expect from him the cheerful looks and language of a person in health. That he mourns while under the pressure of severe bodily suffering, is quite natural. But if under the process and regimen which is used, his disorder is much abated and continues to improve, and his sufferings have passed—if then he should still continue to mourn and complain as when he laboured under the intensity of his complaint, you would judge him to be ungrateful and deserving condemnation. So the believer, when first he comes to Jesus, and is writhing under the wounds of sin and the bonds of iniquity, can hardly be expected to rejoice. But as under his good Physician he experiences a return of health, he must stir up his soul to bless the Lord, “who healeth all his diseases.” If he still labours and mourns under indwelling sin, with the apostle St. Paul, let him also with him triumph and rejoice in his Redeemer.

Judgment.

When Saporess, king of Persia, raised a violent persecution against the Christians, Usthezanus, an old nobleman, a cour-

tier, that had Saporess' government in his minority, being a Christian, was so terrified that he left off his profession. But he, sitting at the court-gate when Simon, an aged holy bishop, was leading to prison, and rising up to salute him, the good bishop frowned upon him, and turned away his face with indignation, as being loth to look upon a man that had denied the faith : Usthezaness fell a weeping, went into his chamber, put off his courtly attire, and broke out into these words : " Ah, how shall I appear before the great God of heaven whom I have denied, when Simon, but a man, will not endure to look upon me ; if he frown, how will God behold me when I come before his tribunal ?" The thought of God's judgment-seat wrought so strongly upon him, that he recovered his spiritual strength, and died a glorious martyr. Thus, did but men consider that they must one day stand before the bar of God's tribunal, they would then be casting up how things stood betwixt him and their own souls. Would any man loiter away the day when he knows that he must show his work to his master at night ? Let every man, then, in in all his doings, remember his end, and so he shall never do amiss ; remember that all must come to a reckoning in that great day.—SPENCER.

It is reported of a certain king of Hungary, who being on a time marvellous sad and heavy, his brother, that was a resolute courtier, would needs know what he ailed. " Oh, brother," quoth he, " I have been a great sinner against God, and I know not how I shall appear before him when he comes to judgment." " These are (said his brother) melancholy fits," and so makes a toy of them, as gallants use to do. The king replied nothing for the present ; but the custom of that country was, that if the executioner of justice came and sounded a trumpet before any man's door, the man was presently, without any more ado, to be led to execution. The king, in the dead of the night, sends for his death's-man, and causeth him to sound his trumpet before his brother's door ; who, seeing and hearing the messenger of death, springs in pale and trembling into his brother's presence, and beseeches the king to tell him wherein he had offended him. " Oh, brother," replies the king, " thou hast loved me and

never offended me, and is the sight of my executioner so dreadful to thee? And shall not so great a sinner as I fear to be brought to the judgment-seat of God?" Thus, did but men stand in St. Jerome's posture, always hearing the trumpet sounding in their ears, they would make more conscience of their ways, and cry out, *What shall I do?* And thus, in all their doings, remembering their latter end, they would never do amiss.—IBID.

A man's own feelings, from which he has drawn pleasure during life, will become hereafter the sources of his moral misery. Like the gastric juice, which in the living animal, though it dissolves the nutriment, is perfectly innoxious to the stomach itself, as soon as the animal dies becomes as corrosive as aquafortis, and actually eats through and dissolves the stomach itself. No punitive act on God's part is necessary; the wicked will punish themselves far more deeply than could be in any way of outward infliction, inasmuch as their very apprehension of God must be that to them which the receiving of the sunbeam is to the dead animal.

The constitution of man's soul is such, that its future exaltation to happiness, or its final ruin must partake of much of the character of *infinity*. With a mind lighted up with divinity—immortal in its highest nature, and immeasurable in its capacities and powers; with its desires vast as eternity, how great must be its fall or its salvation! So the fall of an emperor bears no resemblance to that of one of his subjects; when dethroned, he is hurled from the pinnacle of greatness into the depth of degradation. There is nothing to break his fall—there is no medium between the highest honour which he once enjoyed, and the disgrace and dishonour which attend the loss of his sceptre. He cannot sit down with the respectability of one who was born and lives a subject—he is no longer a king! Such is the case with the soul: there is no medium between God's heaping upon it the greatest favours, and leaving it in an abyss of misery. When it falls, it falls for ever—a splendid ruin—filling created intelligences with a wondrous awe at such a direful state of things as cannot be conceived.

God's judgments, these notices of things terrible and true, pass through man's understanding as an eagle through the air. As long as her flight lasted the air was shaken, but there remains no path behind her.

The student of nature adverts with proud delight to that period in the history of science, when, as facts multiplied, leading phenomena became prominent, laws began to emerge, and generalisation to commence; when the discoveries of a single mind harmonised unnumbered facts, and placed the system of the universe on a basis never after to be shaken. The judgment will be a great process of moral generalisation. Wherever, indeed, the gospel comes with power even now, the process begins. It no sooner obtains a footing amongst a people, than, flinging a contempt on all their earthly distinctions, it produces a new classification. It essays to separate the precious from the vile, and to collect them into a church; to draw a line of demarcation, on the one side of which shall stand all the good, on the other side all the bad; and this classification it intends to be all-comprehensive and ultimate. At present, however, numerous impediments operate to prevent the perfect realisation of the theory. Approximation is all that can be attained. Tares spring up among the wheat; and, notwithstanding every precaution, the foolish virgins mingle with the wise. But the last day shall behold this simplification complete. By the application of a single principle, he will reduce the chaos to order, "dividing the light from the darkness." By the application of a single rule he will gather like things to like; and two classes shall comprise all the infinite varieties. Under one or the other of them, each individual shall find a place—a place so appropriate, that he could not exchange it, even with one of the same class, without doing violence to all fitness and order; and those characteristics, on account of which the place has been assigned him, will be acknowledged by all to be *specific*, his most distinguishing marks. The universe will confess and admire the justice, harmony, and perfection of the distribution.—HARRIS.

18) a sun in the sky. Ignorance, contrary wise, is like a face without eyes, or the sky without a sun. O! how misshapen, dark, and deformed! Ignorance is a miserable and deformed sinfulness. Knowledge is as a pilot to all our christian duties and actions. She sits at the stern in every well-conducted action and service. It is a guide to all our faculties and affections, as light in the bodily eye guides all the bodily parts and members.

You know as much as is good for you, for it is with the mind as it is with the senses. A greater degree of hearing would incommode us; and a nicer degree of seeing would terrify us. If our eyes could see things microscopically, we should be afraid to move. Thus our knowledge is suited to our situation and circumstances. Were we informed more fully beforehand of the good things prepared for us by Providence, from that moment we should cease to enjoy the good things we possess, become indifferent to present duties, and be filled with restless impatience. Or suppose the things foreknown were gloomy and adverse; what dismay and despondency would be the consequence of the discovery; and how many times should we suffer in imagination what we now only endure once in reality! Who would wish to draw back a vail which saves them from so many disquietudes? If some of you had formerly known the troubles through which you have since waded, you would have fainted under the prospect. But what we know not now, we shall know hereafter.

Beyond the most simple precincts of our ordinary perceptions, what adequate power, and therefore what right, do we possess to pronounce upon things, as consistent or otherwise, which may have their congruities in nothing short of the infinite mind? Two straight lines may be conceived, which, as far as sight can trace them, appear parallel, but which, carried out to infinity, would be found to converge; and there may be to any extent in the mysteries of revelation, doctrines and principles co-existent, and co-authoritative, which to all human, and perhaps to all finite intelligence, may seem but like two parallel lines of truth. Tested by earthly criteria, they may have no discoverable approxima-

tion ; in the infinity of the great Supreme, they may harmonise and unite. Consistency, then, *in our grasp of things*, is at the best no safe or proper proof of what is true and right.

Those subjects, which are too difficult in their very nature for our powers, are the source of very many of the unhappy controversies which agitate the church. The mind is not capable of grasping fully the whole truth. Each side seizes a part, and building its own inferences upon these partial premises, they soon find that their own opinions come into collision with those of their neighbours. Moralists tell the following story, which very happily illustrates this species of controversy. In the days of knight errantry, when individual adventurers rode about the world seeking employment in their profession, which was that of the sword, two strong and warlike knights, coming from opposite directions, met each other at a place where a statue was erected. On the arm of the statue was a shield, one side of which was iron, the other of brass ; and as our two heroes reined up their steeds, the statue was upon the side of the road, between them, in such a manner that the shield presented its surface of brass to the one, and of iron to the other. They immediately fell into conversation in regard to the structure before them, when one incidentally alluding to the *iron* shield, the other corrected him, by remarking that it was of *brass*. The knight upon the *iron* side, of course did not receive the correction. He maintained that he was right, and after carrying on the controversy for a short time by harsh language, they gradually grew angry, and soon drew their swords. A long and furious combat ensued, and when at last both were exhausted, unhorsed, and lying wounded upon the ground, they found that the whole cause of their trouble was, that they could not see *both* sides of a shield at a time. Now religious truth is sometimes such a shield, *with various aspects*, and the human mind cannot clearly see all at a time. Two christian knights, clad in strong armour, come up to some object, as moral agency, and view it from opposite stations. One looks at the power which man has over his heart, and laying his foundation there, he builds up

his theory upon that alone. Another looks upon the divine power in the human heart, and laying his own separate foundation, builds up his theory. The human mind is incapable, in fact, of grasping the subject—of understanding how man can be free and accountable, and yet be so much under the control of God as the Bible represents. Our christian soldiers, however, do not consider this. Each takes his own view, and carries it out so far as to interfere with that of the other. They converse about it—they talk more and more warmly—then a long controversy ensues—their dispute agitates the church, and divides brethren from brethren; and why? Why, just because our Creator has so formed us that we cannot, from one point of view, see both sides of the shield at the same time. The combatants, after a long battle, are both unhorsed and wounded; their usefulness, and their christian character is injured, or destroyed.—**JACOB ABBOTT.**

Take a blind man, set him in a clear night with his face upon the moon when it shines, when all the stars are sparkling round about, yet he sees nothing of the brightness of the one, or twinkling of the other, only some glimmerings; or he perceives some kind of reflex upon him, whereby he concludes that the moon is up, and that the stars show themselves. Then take a man in possession of his eyesight, and he discovers all, he walks all over the sky, from star to star, from one constellation to another, he is able to give account of all. Thus take the natural man, set him in the midst of the ordinances; let the administration be ever so pure, the dispensations never so clear, he sees nothing of God, but, as it were through chinks and crannies of nature, some glimpse and glimmer only of divine light. O but the child of God having the perspective glasses of the New Testament, he walks from star to star: faith, hope, and charity shine out—he passes from one attribute of God to another, like stars of the first magnitude—nothing in order to salvation is hid from his eyes.—**SPENCER.**

There is no reason, no universal reason, which will reach through the intellectual universe, for supposing the least imperfection in the present constitution of things; or that

what is murmured at, and objected to as evil, is not in our imagination only, and not really in things themselves. There is no reason to show that a figure by us called regular, which hath equal sides and angles, is absolutely more beautiful than any irregular one. All beauty is relative, and all bodies are truly and naturally beautiful under all possible shapes and proportions that are good in their kind, that are fit for their proper uses and ends of their natures. We ought not then to believe that the banks of the ocean are really deformed, because they have not the form of a regular bulwark; or that the mountains are out of shape because they are not erect pyramidal cones; nor that the stars are unskilfully placed because they are not all situated at uniform distance. These are not natural irregularities, but with respect to our fancies only; nor are they incommodious to the true uses of life, and the design of man's being on the earth. And thus it is with the seeming irregularities of the moral world—their unity and perfection as a whole, and as parts in the universal scheme of things, may not be perceived.

God has revealed great mysteries sufficient for saving faith, though not to satisfy rash curiosity. There is a knowledge of curiosity and discourse, and a knowledge of doing and performance. The art of navigation requires a knowledge how to govern a ship, and what seas are safe, what are dangerous by rocks and sands, and tempests, that often surprise those who sail to them: but the knowledge of the causes of the ebbing and flowing of the sea is not necessary. The mariner must be instructed in the nature and use of the compass, but a knowledge of the mysterious nature of the loadstone is not required of him. So, to believe savingly in Christ, we must know that he is the living and true God, and true man, that died for our redemption; but 'tis not necessary that we should know the manner of the union of his two natures. The discovery of the manner of divine mysteries is not suitable to the nature of faith, for 'tis *the evidence of things not seen*; the obscurity of the object is consistent with the certainty of the assent to it: and 'tis contrary to the end of revelation;

which is to humble us in the modest ignorance of divine mysteries which we cannot comprehend, and to enlighten us in those things which are necessary to be known. The light of faith is as much below the light of glory, as 'tis above the light of nature.

There is an hydropic curiosity, that swells the mind with pride, and is thirsty after the knowledge of things unsearchable. This curiosity has often been fatal to faith. 'Tis like a man's endeavour to climb up to the inaccessible point of a rock that is very hazardous, to see the sun in its brightness, which may safely be seen from the plain ground. The searching into the unsearchable things of God's nature and decrees has been the occasion of many pernicious errors. 'Tis like the silly moth fluttering about the burning light till its wings are singed. To attempt to make supernatural doctrines more receivable to reason by insufficient arguments, weakens the authority and credit of revelation : the endeavour to make them more easily known, makes them more hard to be believed. To venture to explicate them beyond the revelation of them in scripture, is like a man's going out of a fortress wherein he is safe into an open field, and exposing himself to the assaults of the enemy.

Flaw.

As when a physician that is gifted in his profession doth all that belongs to the best of his judgment ; the drugs that he gives, and the ingredients that he infuseth, are able to work their effect, if they fall into a suitable body : but if the patient be froward, and will not be ruled, or his body labour under an invincible malady, he is never the better for it ; but the disease is aggravated. Now the fault is not in the physician, nor in the physic, they be both very good ; but in the party that was not prepared for it, or that would not receive it, and convert it to that use for which it was prepared. Thus it is, that God gave the law for a good law, an

holy and just law, as a true direction for the reformation of life and manners; but the party that received it did not take it thus, so that, not from the nature of the law, but by the ill acceptance of the party, it comes to be the *strength of sin*. The law of itself is said to be “a light unto our feet, and a lantern to our paths;” and the light of itself, we are but able to follow it; but because of our own natural indisposition, it comes so to pass, that the law which should pull down sin, gives *strength unto it*; and being made to *kill sin*, gives *life unto it*.—SPENCER.

If a man have a corrupt and dangerous sore in his flesh, if he will be cured, or prevent the danger of a gangrene, he must prepare himself both for trouble, pain, and many other inconveniences; as, first, the lancing of it, then the discharging of its inward corruption, then corrosives to eat out the proud flesh; and lastly, searing and cauterising, before any healing plaster be applied. Even so in the spiritual healing of our sins, the work of the law must precede the work of the gospel: first, that of the law to humble us; then that of the gospel to comfort us. Before there be any obtaining of pardon, any comfort in the hope of redemption, the law must take us in hand, search our frailty, lance our sins, cast out the corruption of our natures, make us cry with the smart of our wounds. And then it is that the gentle cataplasms of the gospel may be applied, and the comforts of remission ministered unto us from the Physician of our souls, *Christ Jesus*.—IBID.

The blessed “Author and Finisher of our faith” has said, “Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets. I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. Destroy the law? Yes, just as much as the infant is destroyed, when he attains to perfect stature and to manly strength. Destroy the law? Yes, as much as the instrument is destroyed, because it wakes to sweeter melody, or bolder tones. Destroy the law? Yes, as the vineyard is destroyed, “when a blessing” being in its comparatively scant vintage, “the vats now are filled, and the presses overflow,” with its gathered produce, in the sweetest, choicest wine. Destroy

the law? Yes, as the morning light is lost, or can be destroyed, when all its mountain mists are scattered, and all its lingering shadows fled, and the once twilight dawn has travelled onward to a bright and perfect day.—IBID.

It is just because fallen man is flung out of the region of law that he is unhappy ; like as if you could imagine one of the planets flung out of the attractions of gravitation, and sent adrift as a wanderer through the immensity of space, without any object or direction. How can regularity be restored to that wandering globe? Only by bringing it back again within the attraction of gravitation. And what gravitation is to the planet, the law of God is to the souls of men. Fallen man is driven away from holy attraction, and it is only when man is born of God, born again, born from above, created anew, that he is restored within the range of that attraction ; and in proportion as the consequences of his wanderings are removed from him, and the lingering resistance within him to the orbit of holiness is overcome, in the same proportion he is at home, at home with God, in holy, happy love. Did he always live, and move, within the boundaries of law, man were for ever blessed.

Life.

Those who travel through deserts would often be at a loss for water if certain indications, which the hand of Providence has marked out, did not serve to guide him to a supply. The secret wells are for the most part discoverable from the verdure which is nourished by their presence. So the fruitfulness of good works of the believer, amidst the deadness and sterility around him, proclaim the Christian's life.

It was well said by Sir Francis Bacon, that "old wood

is best to burn ; old friends best to trust ; and old books best to read." What vast value do scholars put upon an ancient manuscript ? Doubtless, the oldest of all manuscripts is the book of life ; and the writing our names therein the first-born of all God's favours. If God sets a value on the first-fruits of our services, how careful should we be to magnify the first-fruits of his goodness ! If old charters be of so great esteem as they are in the world, what an immense estimate should we set upon the most ancient magna charta of our eternal election, " having this seal, the Lord knoweth them that are his !"

If the saying of the stoic be true, "*In sapientum decretis nulla est litura*," i. e. in the decrees of wise men there can be no blotting nor blurring,—how much more may it be asserted concerning the decrees of the infinitely wise God ! If it became Pilate to say, "What I have written I have written," it would certainly misbecome the great and immutable God to blot so much as any one single name out of the Lamb's book of life, written by himself before the world was. We may rest assured, that this book will admit of no *deleatur*, nor of any expurgatory index.

Of the great prizes in human life, it is not often the lot of the most enterprising to obtain many : they are placed on opposite sides of the path, so that it is impossible to approach one of them without proportionably receding from another ; whence it arises that the wisest plans are founded on a compromise between good and evil, where much that is the object of desire is finally abandoned and relinquished, in order to secure superior advantages. The candidate for immortality is reduced to no such alternative ; the possession of his object comprehends all ; it combines in itself, without imperfection and without alloy, all the scattered portions of good for which the world are accustomed to contend.

All mankind being condemned as soon as born, life is but a reprieve, a suspension of citation, a breathing time of mercy, a suspending of wrath—the sleeping of a storm, which is about to burst forth in floods of destruction on all who are not sheltered in Christ—it is the staying the

almighty arm of Him who saith, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay."—This is just what life is—a calm to usher in a mighty tempest.

As a man acts in a pageant, or in a play—he is in some sort a king or a beggar, for the time, but we value him not as he is then—but as he is when he is off the stage; so while we live here, we act the part, some of the rich man, some of the nobleman, some of a beggar, or poor man—all is but acting a part. We are not rich in the grave more than others. Since this world, then, is but acting a part, why should we think ourselves then better for anything here? Does one player esteem himself better than another, for the part he has acted? It is not he that acts the greatest part, but he that acts any part best. We value not men as they are when they are acting, but as they are after.

The ordinary manna which Israel gathered for their daily use, did presently corrupt and breed worms, but that which was laid up before the Lord, the hidden manna in the tabernacle, did keep without putrefaction. So our life which we have here in the wilderness of this world, doth presently vanish and corrupt; but our life which is kept in the tabernacle, our life which "is hid with Christ in God," that never runs into death. Natural life is like the river Jordan, empties itself into the Dead Sea; but spiritual life is like the waters of the sanctuary, which, being shallow at the first, grow deeper and deeper into a river, which cannot be passed through: water continually springing, and running forward into eternal life; so that the life which we leave is mortal and perishing, and that which we go into is durable and abounding. Job. x. 10.

There be many things that move, and yet their motion is not an argument of life. A windmill, when the wind serveth, moveth, and moveth very nimbly too; yet this cannot be said to be a living creature, it moveth only by an external cause, by an artificial contrivance; it is so framed that when the wind sitteth in such, or such a corner it will move, and so having but an external motion and cause to move, and no inward principle, no life within it to move it, it is an argument that it is no living creature. So it is, also, if a man

see another man move, and move very fast in those things which of themselves are the ways of God ; you shall see him move as fast to hear a sermon as his neighbour doth ; as forward and hasty to thrust himself, and bid himself a guest to the Lord's table (when God hath not bid him) as any. Now the question is, what *principle* sets him to work ? if it be an inward principle of life, out of a sincere affection and love to God and his ordinances, that carrieth him to this, it argueth that man hath some life of grace ; but if it be some wind that bloweth on him, the wind of law, the wind of danger or penalty, the wind of fashion or custom, to do as his neighbours do—if these, or the like, be the things that draw him thither, this is no argument of life at all ; it is a cheap thing, it is a counterfeit and dead piece of service.—SPENCER.

Light.

Much knowledge may be acquired of the gospel by a natural man who continues to sit under a faithful ministry. His *affections*, as well as his judgment, may embrace it. He may have a great admiration of its blessings and many excellencies, and be convinced that it is the highest gift of God, and designed for man's happiness. But he is still in the depths of ignorance, and knows not those truths which must be seen and felt before he can embrace it. It has mysteries which the natural man receiveth not ; these only can be taught him of the Spirit. It is just as a man of fine taste and education may admire a noble building without having read Vitruvius, or knowing anything of the rules of architecture. But his knowledge of its details and admirable parts, and all that constitutes its harmony and beauty, is little or nothing. These are mysteries of a science he has never been taught. His judgment, though right as to the pre-eminence of the edifice generally, yet goes but a little way, and must be subject to innumerable mistakes : it is, at the best, but a most superficial knowledge, without the capa-

city of entering into the arts, the methods, the proportions, and the particular excellencies of the whole structure in all the parts of it. And therefore the pleasure felt in surveying it is exceedingly limited.

The Holy Ghost must shine upon your graces, or you will not be able to see them; and your good works must shine upon your faith, or your neighbours will not be able to see it.

The path of the just is his covenant walk before God. There is no visible difference, as unto light, between the light of the morning and the light of the evening; yea, this latter sometimes, from gleams of the setting sun, seems to be more glorious than the other. But herein they differ; the first goes on gradually unto more light, until it comes to perfection; the other gradually gives place to darkness, until it comes to midnight. So it is as unto the light of the just and the hypocrite, and so is it as unto their paths. At first setting out, they may seem alike and equal; yea, convictions and spiritual gifts, acted with corrupt ends in some hypocrites, may for a time give a greater lustre of profession than the grace of others sincerely converted unto God may attain unto. But herein they discover their different natures; the one increaseth, and goeth on constantly, though it may be sometimes but faintly; the other decays, grows dim, gives place to darkness, and crooked walking.

There are many false lights in the world. There is but one true light. 'Tis our nature to be drawn forth and dazzled by those false lights, by worldly ambition, carnal pleasures, uncertain riches. We seek the sparkling but fatal deceit, we encircle it, hover nearer and nearer. Warnings there are to stop us in our deluded course. A kind hand would often stop us, often it is thrust between us and the scorching glare, too often with too many in vain. They reach the object of their desire, but it becomes their destruction. The true light, the source of life and cheerfulness and peace, has shined in vain for them; has been shunned as if it were some horrible and pestilential meteor. Would you see the parable of this in nature's volume? See the moth drawn forth by the glare of a mean and rank smelling

candle. Its red and glowing flame proves only too attractive; the insect hovers nearer and nearer, and the hand of the observer is often thrust before the treacherous light; how very often is the warning offered in vain, the flame is reached, but with it death! For the same insect, the bright and glorious sun, the source of life and health, has shined in vain; the moth has shunned it; we seldom see it on the wing till the bright and beautiful sun has come to its setting.

The fathers were sanctified with the same Spirit of Christ with us; difference there is none in the substance, but only in the accidents and circumstances of effusion, and manifestation; as light in the sun, and light in a star, is in itself the same original light, but very much varied in the dispensation.

As regards the mysteries of our most holy faith, since we are not in darkness, but within the fringes and circles of a bright cloud, let us search as far into it as we are guided by the light of God, and when we are forbidden by the thicker part of the cloud, step back and worship.

"Let your light shine." If the sun shine on a dull brick or stone, they reflect none of its beams; there is nothing in them capable of this; nor is there in an ungodly man any natural power of reflecting the light of God. But let the sun shine upon a diamond, and see what rays of sparkling beauty it emits. Just so the Christian, who has the grace of the Spirit; when God shines on his soul, beams of celestial loveliness are reflected by him on the world. "The christian character should *savour* holiness." The promise is, "I will be as the dew unto Israel;" and how sweet is the fragrance of the flower after the falling of the dew! so must the believer be under the soft distillments of the droppings of heaven on his heart.

It is not enough that all our hindrances of knowledge are removed, for that is but the opening, of the covering of the book of God; but when opened, it is written with an hand that every eye cannot read. Though the windows of the east be open, yet every eye cannot behold the glories of the sun; the eye that is not made solar cannot see the sun—the eye must be fitted to the splendour; so it is not the wit

of man, but the spirit of man, that learns the Divine philosophy.

What is splendour, what is wealth, if the Lord shed not the light of his glorious countenance thereon? Even the lustre striking gold, yea, the lively diamond itself, were but a nothingness, and dark, did not the favouring light of heaven deign, as it were, to be spilt upon them. Yonder ambient orbs that light up the cerulean heavens, and roll in the eternal universe before the throne of God, would be wanting in all their radiant glimmerings, did not the enlivening beams of the sun illumine them: the "font of day" itself—yonder ascending ruler of the seasons, and brightest, though but faint image of its Creator—has all its light from him, and were not, but that "in the beginning the Spirit of God had *brooded* upon the face of the waters." And what were man without the light of revelation? Even though puffed and bolstered up by every dogma of philosophy, if the glorious light of Christ's salvation shone not on his sad estate—what, ah! what were man?

There is a light of reason which is imparted to every man by nature; but this light is darkness compared with the light which the saints enjoy, as the night is dark to the day even when the moon is in its full glory. This night light of reason may save a person from some ditch or pond, great and broad sins, but it will never help him to escape the more secret corruptions which the saints see like atoms in the beams of spiritual knowledge. Put the case of two persons, one of whom is gifted with the highest order of intellect, but unenlightened by the Spirit; the other a poor ignorant person, deficient in intellectual capacity, but possessed of spiritual discernment. It is surprising how much this man will excel the other in true wisdom, and the knowledge of good and evil. And just as a person with natural weak sight yet will see everything more clearly by the light of day, than one gifted with the most piercing sight can discern objects at midnight, so will the naturally weak child of God behold things as one who walks in the light, where others grope their way in darkness.

"Who is among you that feareth the Lord?" &c. A child

of light continues "light in the Lord:" he may walk in darkness, and to his sense have no light, which yet is the remainder of light that makes him discern his want; but he really is not darkness as before; he has summer's sun, that shines longer, brighter, and warmer; and his winter's sun, that shines shorter, is more frequently clouded, and has less heat; he has his fair days and foul, and rainy days, and a changeful intercourse of day and night, wherein he has only the moon and stars, but there is still light more or less.

Love.

The terrors of the law have much the same effect on our duties and obedience, as frost has on a stream: it hardens, cools, and stagnates. Whereas, let the shining of divine love rise upon the soul,—repentance will then flow, our hardness and coldness thaw and melt away, and all the blooming fruits of godliness flourish and abound.

Were a man suddenly precipitated into the sea, and after making ineffectual struggles to save himself, to give up all for lost—should he at this crisis perceive a life-boat approaching, and a friendly hand extended for his rescue, he would at first scarcely credit his senses, or realise that he was safe: his joy would be so great, and his gratitude to his preserver so ardent. But after the first transports had subsided, he would feel more real pleasure in contemplating the vessel, in admiring the wisdom apparent in its construction, and its admirable adaptedness for saving from death all who were in his late situation, than he would when he viewed it merely as the means of saving his own life. So the sinner, when first he views himself rescued from destruction, is full of love to Christ for his peculiar and unmerited mercy to himself. But as he increases in knowledge and christian attainments, and has clearer views of the character of God, and the wisdom and grace which appear in the plan of redemption, his love has less and less of selfishness.

Suppose two persons equally desirous to gain your affections ;—one far distant, and not expecting to see you for a long time ; the other always present with you, and at liberty to use all means to win your love, able to flatter, and gratify you in a thousand ways. Still you prefer the absent one ; and that you may keep him in remembrance, you often retire by yourself to think of his love to you, and view again and again the mementos of his affection ; to read his letters, and pour out your heart in return. Such is now your case : the world is always before you, to flatter, promise, and please. But if you really prefer to love God, you will fix your thoughts on him, often retire for meditation and prayer, and recount the pleasant gifts of his providence, and especially his infinite mercy to your soul ; you will read frequently his holy word, which is the letter he has sent you, as really as if it were directed to you by name.

As fruits artificially raised or forced in the hothouse have not the exquisite flavour of those fruits which are grown naturally, and in their due season ; so that obedience which is forced by the terrors of the law, wants the genuine flavour and sweetness of that obedience which springs forth from a heart warmed and meliorated with the love of God in Christ Jesus.

God's love to his people is from everlasting to everlasting : there is no manifestation of it known or conceivable by us that can be compared to the love of the cross. The light of the sun is always the same, but it shines brightest to us at noon ; the cross of Christ was the noon-tide of everlasting love—the meridian splendour of eternal mercy. There were many bright manifestations of the same love before, but they were like the light of the morning, that shines more and more unto the perfect day ; and that perfect day was when Christ was on the cross, when darkness covered the land.

You shall have a man scrape and crouch, and keep ado with a man he never knew or saw before, one that he is ready, it may be, (when his back is turned,) to curse ; but yet he will do this for his gain, his alms, to make a prey, a use of him some way or other : this man loves his alms, loves his prey, loveth his bounty ; but all this is no argument of

love to the man. Thus, for a man to make towards God, and to seem to own him, and to be one of "the generation of those that seek his face," to address himself in outward conformity, and many other things by which another may (if he have no other ground) judge charitably of him; yet all this is nothing, except a man may discern something that may give him a cast, that his spirit doth uprightly and sincerely seek God, that he loveth God for God himself; that he loveth grace for grace itself; he loveth the commandments of God, because they are God's commandments, &c. And thus it is, that our love, our desire after God, must be carried sincerely, not for any by and base respects whatsoever.—SPENCER.

The son of a poor man that hath not a penny to give or leave him, yields his father obedience as cheerfully as the son of a rich man, that looks for a great inheritance: it is indeed love to the father, not wages to the father, that is the ground of a good child's obedience. If there were no heaven, God's children would obey him; and though there were no condemnation, yet would they do their duty. So powerfully doth the love of the Father constrain them.—IBID.

Every beam of light proceeding from the body of the sun is either direct, broken, or reflex; direct, when it shineth out upon the centre in a lineary motion without any obliquity; broken, when it meets with some grosser body, so that it cannot shine outright, but is enforced to incline to one part or other, and therefore called a collateral or broken light; reflex, when, lighting upon some more gross body, it is beaten back, and so reflects upon its first principle. Thus let the sons of men pretend ever so much to the love of God, their love is like a broken or reflecting love, seldom direct; broken, when it is fixed upon the things of this world; reflex, when it aims at self-interest; whereas the love of God is the only true love; a direct love without obliquity; a sincere love without reflection; such a love as breaks through all impediments, and hath nothing in heaven but God, and desireth nothing on earth in comparison of him; such a love as looketh upon the world by

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way of subordination ; but upon God by way of eminency.—
SPENCER.

What Alexander said of his two friends, Hephestion and Craterus, is made good in the practice of too, too many in these days. “Hephestion,” says he, “loves me as I am Alexander, but Craterus loves me as I am king Alexander ;” so that the one loved him for his person, the other for the benefits he received by him. Thus, some Nathanaels there be that love Christ for his person, for his personal excellencies, for his personal beauty, for his personal glory ; they see those perfections of grace and holiness in Christ, that would render him very lovely and desirable in their eyes, though they should never get a kingdom or a crown by him. But so it is that most (which is to be lamented) do it only in respect of the benefit they receive by him ; scarce any love Christ, but his rewards ; some few there are that follow him for love, but many for the loaves ; few for his inward excellencies, many for his outward advantages ; and few that they may be made good by him, but many that they may be made great by him.—IBID.

Light is the only object of our eye, for our eye was made to see the light ; but light is not only in the body of the sun, or moon, or stars, but by beams it doth insinuate itself into all these lower creatures, and presents itself in that great variety of colours wherewith this lower world is beautified. In seeing them, we see the light, and delighting in them, we take pleasure in the light from whom they have their gracefulness. Even so God is the proper object of our love, and his goodness must draw our abilities unto it ; and it is able to satisfy them to the full, though they to the full can never possibly apprehend it : so that out of the nature of God, we need not seek for any other object of our love : but because God is pleased to communicate himself unto his creatures, and frame the reasonable part of them according to his image, he would have our love to attend this communicating of himself, and be bestowed on them whom he doth so grace : and this one so loving of others, our neighbours, ourselves, detracts nothing from that ALL which is

due to God, because we do it by his direction, and our love doth still reflect upon him, and in loving them, we love and admire him also.—IBID.

Wherever I have travelled, I could never judge of the height of any hill, but from the vale beneath. The height of God's eternal love in Christ is only to be seen when we descend into the depths of the vale of humility.

How are our affections to be excited and maintained in lively exercises towards their object? Is it by sitting down to muse upon how you have felt in former times, or how you are feeling now? No, it is by thinking of your friend, by recollecting in your own mind, and recounting to others, his various excellencies, everything in him and about him that is fitted to attract, and fix, and strengthen attachment. So should it be of your heavenly Friend; apply the illustration. Above all, dwell rather on his love to you, than on yours to him.

"The spirit of love." Nothing will compensate for the want of this spirit in the christian ministry. The most conclusive and undeniable argument followed up with the most pointed application, will in general fall powerless where the spirit of love puts not forth its influence. It is like the stormy wind and wave which idly beat on the iceberg, and leave no impression behind them; but let the rays of the sun fall upon it, it thaws and melts under their influence. So the heart of man, hitherto impenetrable and frozen, dissolves, and is subdued when the beams of love shine upon it.

We must rejoice when we see the golden chain which links the different members of the body of Christ together is not weakened; that amidst many differences of opinion among us, there is still a sound practical feeling of love to God, and good will to men. If, therefore, we see christian love struggling against the convulsions of the moment, and that it is not subdued by these convulsions, then we may believe, as the wind which shakes the oak of our country only strengthens and increases the nourishment it derives from the roots, so all disputes and agitations without will only strengthen the great work of religion in our hearts,

and give a lovelier influence to the blessed gospel of our Lord.—CHANCELLOR RAIKES.

The sun appears red through a fog, and generally red at rising and setting. The red rays having a greater momentum, which gives them power to traverse so dense an atmosphere, which the other rays have not—the increased quantity of atmosphere, which oblique rays must traverse, loaded with the mists and vapours which are usually formed at those times, prevents the other rays from reaching us. It is thus that but a few of the rays of God's love (like the red rays) reach the soul. Sin, passion, and unbelief, surround it as with a dense atmosphere of mists and vapours; and though the beams of God's love are poured out innumerable as the sun's rays, they are lost, and scattered, and few of them shine upon the soul.

Love is the diamond among the jewels of the believer's breastplate. The other graces shine like the precious stones of nature, with their own peculiar lustre and various hues, but the diamond is white. Now, in white all the other colours are united; so, in love is centred every other christian grace and virtue; "love is the fulfilling of the law." It is the only source of true obedience to the commands of God. If we love God, we must necessarily love that holy law which is a transcript of his divine mind and will.

Some people would make religion to consist of little else than a *self-denying* course of the practice of virtue and obedience; they make religion a *house of correction work*: no, no, I *love* the service of my God; like the bird, I fly at liberty on the wings of obedience to his holy will.

The love of God is not to be summoned into being or activity at a call. It is not by any simple or direct effort that you can bid it into any operation. You can say to the hand do this, and it doeth it, but we have no such mastery over the untractable heart. The true way of bidding an emotion into the heart, is to bid into the mind its appropriate and counterpart object. If I want to light up resentment in my heart, let me think of the injury which provoked it; or if I want to be moved with compassion, let me dwell on some picture of wretchedness; or to be regaled with a

sense of beauty, let me look out of myself on the glories of a summer landscape ; or, to stir up within me a grateful affection, let me call to remembrance some friendly demonstration of a kind and trusty benefactor ; or, finally, to rekindle in my cold and deserted bosom the love of God, let the love of God to me be the theme of my believing contemplation.

—DR. CHALMERS.

How can I strengthen the claims of filial love by argument ; much less the affection of a son to a mother, where love loses its awe, and veneration is mixed with tenderness ? What can I say upon such a subject ? What can I do but repeat the ready truths, which, with the quick impulse of the mind, must spring to the lips of every man on such a theme ? Filial love ! The morality of instinct ! the sacrament of nature and duty ; or, rather let me say, it is mis-called a duty ; for it flows from the heart without effort, and is its delight, its indulgence, its enjoyment. It is guided, not by the slow dictates of reason ; it awaits not encouragement from reflection, or from thought ; it asks no aid of memory—it is an innate, but active consciousness of having been the object of a thousand tender solicitudes—a thousand waking watchful cares—of much anxiety and patient sacrifices, unremarked and unrequited by the object. It is a gratitude founded upon a conviction of obligations not remembered, but the more binding because not remembered ; because conferred before the tender reason could acknowledge, or the infant memory record them ; a gratitude and affection which no circumstance should subdue, and which few can strengthen. Such is the believer's love to his God. Love full of tenderness—love deprived of fear. How does it bind him with the force of a sacrament—the alligation of love ! Yet how spontaneous does it flow forth without effort, and almost without a thought ! The enjoyment and delight of the soul—it is like an innate, inborn principle. Ten thousand are the obligations to this love and gratitude which start forth at the bidding of memory, and ten thousand times ten thousand the mercies and blessings beyond the reach of memory, which bind the more because not remembered.

The sincerity of God's heart and affection to his people appears in the unmoveableness of his love. As there is no shadow of turning in the being of God, so not in the love of God to his people; there is no vertical point; his love stands still like the sun in Gibeah, it goes not down, or declines, but continues in its full strength.—Isa. liv. 7, 8. *With everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.* Sorry man repents of his love, the hottest affection cools in his bosom; love in the creature is like fire in the hearth, now blazing, anon blinking, and going out; but in God, like fire in the element that never fails. In the creature 'tis like water in a river that falls and riseth; but in God, like water in the sea that is always full, and knows no ebbing or flowing. Nothing can take off his love where he hath placed it; it can neither be corrupted, nor conquered.

Love is compared to fire, the nature of which is, to assimilate to itself all that comes near it, or to consume them; it turns all into fire or ashes; nothing that is heterogeneous can long dwell with its own simple, pure nature. Thus love to Christ will not suffer the near neighbourhood of anything in its bosom that is derogatory to Christ; either it will reduce, or abandon it, be it pleasure, profit, or whatever else. Abraham, who loved Hagar and Ishmael in their due place, when the one began to jostle with her mistress, and the other to jeer and mock at Isaac, he puts them both out of doors: love to Christ will not suffer thee to side with anything against Christ, but take his part with him against any that oppose him.

True love unto Christ keeps the whole heart together, and carries it all one way; and so makes it universal, uniform, and constant in all its affections unto God; for unsteadfastness of life proceeds from a divided or double heart. As in the motions of the heavens, there is one common circumvolution, which, ex æquô, carrieth the whole frame daily unto one point from east to west, though each several sphere hath a several cross-way of its own, wherein some move with swifter, and others with slower motion; so, though saints may have their several corruptions, and those like-

wise in some stronger than in others, yet, being all animated by one and the same spirit, they all agree in a steady and uniform motion unto Christ. If a stone were placed under the concave of the moon, though there be air, and fire, and water between, yet through them all it would hasten to its own place ; so, be the obstacles never so many, or the conditions never so various, through which a man must pass, “ through evil report, and good report,” through terrors and temptations, through a sea and wilderness, through fiery serpents, and sons of Anak ; yet if the heart love Christ indeed, and conclude that heaven is its home, nothing shall be able totally to discourage it from hastening thither, whither Christ the forerunner is gone before.

Our love to our brethren is, “ quoad nos,” an “ à posteriori,”—not only the evidence, but even the measure of our love to Christ. “ He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen ?” saith the apostle. He that hath not love enough in him for a man like himself, how can he love God, whose goodness, being above our knowledge, requireth transcendency in our love ? This, then, is a sure rule,—he that loveth not a member of Christ, loveth not him ; and he who groweth in his love to his brethren, groweth likewise in his love to Christ. For as there is the same proportion of one to five, as there is of twenty to an hundred, though the number be far less ; as the motion of the shadow upon the dial answereth exactly to that proportion of motion and distance which the sun hath in the firmament, though the sun goeth many millions of miles when the shadow (it may be) moveth not the breadth of a hand ; so, though our love to Christ ought to be a far more abundant love than to any of his members, yet certain it is, that the measure of our progress in brotherly love is punctually answerable to the growth of our love to Christ ; and our love to Christ is as accurately measured by it as the progress of the sun in the heavens is measured by the dial.

“ If ye love me, ye will keep my word,” saith our Saviour. But fear induces a desertion of our duty when there is a cross to be taken up. Just like a frost, it will hinder the

breaking forth of carnal lusts into notorious acts, as the cold of winter binds the earth, that noxious weeds cannot spring up ; but love, like the summer heat, is productive of all good fruits. Love is like the child serving in his father's house, where the exactest obedience is voluntary, liberal, and ingenuous, and without calculation for profit. Fear brings its mercenary service, cold, stinted and constrained, where all is done on the system of barter and exchange. Fear will be in action for a time, so long as motives are supplied to keep it alive ; but love is an inward principle that has life in itself, and therefore is continually operative without regard to outward considerations. This secures obedience. Christ has fastened us to his service by a chain composed of his most precious benefits, and love delights to wear his easy and gentle yoke as a costly jewel on her breast. Fear tries in vain to make an alliance between the flesh and the spirit, obeys some commands and transgresses others ; such an union as that of two persons unequally yoked together. The language of fear is, how wearisome this service ; but love exclaims, while she fastens her eyes with adoring love and devotedness on her Saviour, " My Lord, and my God !"

As the light of the sun diffused in the air burns nothing, but the beams contracted in a glass kindle proper matter ; so the considering of the common salvation will not be so affecting, nor so warm and soften the heart, as the serious applicative thoughts of it to ourselves. It is not the love of God which is common to all, and diffused like the sunbeams over the whole family of man ; but the love of God, concentrated and burning on the cross of Christ for me a sinner, which fires and melts my heart—'tis this—" he loved me, and gave himself for me."—SPENCER.

Man.

When the Almighty was about to create man, he summoned before him the angels of his attributes, the watchers

of his dominions. They stood in council around his hidden throne. Create him not, said the angel of *truth*; "he will defile thy sanctuary with falsehood, though thou shouldest stamp on his countenance thine image, the seat of confidence." Create him not, said the angel of *justice*; "he will depart from equity, he will oppress the weaker." Create him not, said the angel of *peace*; "he will water the earth with blood, the first being of his race will be the slayer of his brother." So spake the angels of the attributes of Jehovah, when *Mercy*, the youngest and dearest child of the Eternal, arose, and clasping his knees, Create him, Father, said she, in thy likeness, the offspring of thy loving-kindness. When all thy messengers forsake him, I will seek and save him, and lead him back to good. Because he is weak, I will incline his heart to compassion, and make for his sin atonement. When he departs from *truth*, from *justice*, from *peace*, the rod of my love shall chastise him, and soften his soul to repentance. The Father of all gave ear, and created man in his own image, while *truth*, and *justice*, and *peace*, shared together the throne of his heart. Envy looked up from her gloomy dwelling, and her face gathered blackness when she saw his bliss. *Sin* came with *sorrow*, and *Death*, in the train, and *Truth*, *Peace*, and *Justice* fled at their approach. Yet the child of *man* was not forgotten; for when he fell, *Mercy's* arms were stretched out to save him. When the arrow of sin was rankling in his bosom, her hand brought balm to heal him, and hid with a robe of beauty the scar of his wound. When the tempest of sorrow hung over him, she looked from the cloud, and the sunshine of her smile painted it with the rainbow of *hope*. When *Death* appeared with his terrors, she was there, and gave him the victory: then, clasping her favourite in her arms, she bore him in triumph to the throne of her Father. Remember thine origin, O man! when thou art hard and unkind to thy brethren. *Mercy* alone willed thee to be; her love and her pity alone did nourish thee at their bosoms.

It is beyond our conception the honour which man's nature was advanced to, when the Son of God assumed it, and took it into union with his divine person. Though it

had no intrinsic dignity or glory above what other intelligent, finite, sinless beings are capable of, yet it had a greater relative glory than any other creature had, or can have; just as the body of man, how mean soever it is in itself, yet when considered in relation to the soul, *that* adds a degree of excellency to it, in a relative sense, greater than what belongs to every creature destitute of reason; so the human nature of Christ, though it had not in itself a glory greater than what another finite creature might have been advanced to, yet, when considered as united to the divine nature, its glories, in a relative sense, may be said to be infinite.

Man, without religion, is like a leaky vessel without hands on the tempestuous ocean. Sin has already made a destructive inroad in his nature, and the tide of corruption is daily flowing into, and filling his soul: he is tossed about without aid on the boisterous ocean of the world, till at last he breaks to pieces, and sinks to rise no more. He is a ship without a pilot—a vessel without a rudder.

Man's deviation from his duty was, it seems, a disorder in the moral system of the universe, for which nothing less than divine wisdom could conceive a remedy; the remedy devised nothing less than divine wisdom and power could apply. Man's disobedience was in the moral world, what it would be in the natural, if a planet were to wander from its orbit, or the constellations to start from their appointed places. It was an evil for which the regular constitution of the world had no cure, which nothing but the immediate interposition of Providence could repair.

Dust may be raised for a while into a little cloud, and may seem considerable while held up by the wind that raises it; but when the force of that is spent, it falls again, and returns to the earth out of which it was raised. Such a thing is man; man is but a mass of dust, and must return to his earth.

Geologists have discovered in the rocks composing the crust of the earth proofs of a regular succession of formations; and that animals of a different structure have been imbedded, and are preserved in their successive layers. In the earlier formed strata animals are found which are low,

as we express it, in the chain of existence ; in higher strata, reptiles produced from eggs of great bulk and more complete structure are discovered ; above the strata containing these reptiles there are found mammalia, a higher class of animals ; and in the looser and more superficial strata are the bones of the rhinoceros, elephant, &c. And we add, geologists agree that man has been created last of all. From these facts it is supposed that there has been a succession of animals gradually increasing in the perfection of their structure ; that the highest and most perfect were not produced under the first impulse of creative power, and that it was only in her mature efforts that these were created. And what a beautiful idea does this afford of the nature of man considered as immortal, with that nature ascending upwards to perfection ! At first, in its dark, and unregenerate, and half lifeless state, corresponding with the animals we have noticed in the lowest chain of existence. Passing from this into the regenerate and spiritual state in which it begins to live to God—ascending still higher in the scale of spiritual existence from grace to grace—until it is called up from this lower world to be a spirit, to stand in the presence of God ; and last of all, to shine resplendent in the full and perfect image of its Creator—of the first and highest order of created intelligences.

Mercy.

When all means are strengthless and dead, and yet the mercy comes, “ O,” says a soul, “ now I see that God is God Almighty, God all-sufficient.” “ She that is a widow and desolate,” saith the apostle, “ trusteth in God.” We seldom trust in God till a desolation comes upon the means, then we learn to trust in God. So long as one who is learning to swim can touch the bottom, can touch the earth with his foot, he does not commit himself to the stream ; but

when he can feel no bottom, then he commits himself to the mercy of the waves. Now, so long as a man can stand upon the second cause, and can feel the bottom with his feet, he does not commit himself to the stream of mercy; but when once the second cause is gone, and he cannot feel the bottom, then he commits himself to the stream of mercy.

Appius, in the Roman story, was a very great oppressor of the liberties of the commons, and particularly, he took away all appeals to the people in case of life and death. Not long after this decree, he being called in question for forcing the wife of Virginius, found all the bench of judges against him, and was constrained, for saving his life, to prefer an appeal to the people, which was denied him with great shouts and outcries of all, saying, "He is forced to appeal, who, by barring all appeals in case of life and death, was the death of many a man." Thus, justice revenged mercy's quarrel upon this unmerciful man; and certainly, if we expect mercy at the hands of God or man, we must show mercy; for there shall be judgment without mercy to him that will show no mercy; and that happeneth many times even in this life, when God is pleased to reckon with hard-hearted men that have no bowels of compassion.—SPENCER.

David, after his victory over the Philistines, calls Ziba before him, and asks him, whether there were not yet any man left of the house of Saul that he might do him a kindness for Jonathan's sake; whereupon they presented unto him Mephibosheth, a poor lame impotent man, who no sooner sees the king, but falls on his face, and looks upon himself as a dead dog, far below the king's favour. "No matter," says the king, "fear not, for I will show thee kindness for Jonathan's sake," &c. And thus, if there be any forlorn Joseph that is fallen into the pit of despair, let him but cast up his eyes to the hills from whence cometh his salvation, and God will show him mercy for Christ Jesus' sake. If there be any lame impotent Mephibosheth, any wounded spirit, any of the household of faith that is distressed, God will inquire after them, and do them good for Christ Jesus' sake.—IBID.

If a judge of an assize should say to a felon, or some malefactor in the gaol, Confess but your faults, and become an honest man, I will pardon you ; and not only so, but you shall be made justice of the peace, or some great man, whereby you shall have power to judge and examine others ; surely he would upon the promise be moved quickly to confess the felony, and forego his theft. Thus it is that the Judge of all the world makes great tenders of mercy, that if a sinner will truly and from his heart confess his sins, and resolve to leave them, he shall have pardon ; and not only so, but he shall be made a king and priest unto God the Father, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ Jesus. Rom. viii. 17.—*IBID.*

It is observable in Scripture, that God hath always had saints of several degrees and sizes, and that some of them have had more communion with him than others. From among the multitude he chose twelve to be with him ; from among the twelve he chose three, (Peter, James, and John,) which were of the privy council ; from among three he chose out John as his peculiar bosom favourite, of whom it is said five times, that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved. So now to this day God hath his babes, who eat milk and nothing else ; his children, who know their Father's will and are assured of his love ; his young men, who go out to war ; and the fathers in Israel, whose gray-headed experience and wisdom abound, for they knew him from the beginning. But is it not a great mercy to be one of God's, though but one of his little ones, yea the least of all : to be a star, though not of the first magnitude : to be a disciple, though not a John, nor one of the three, nor one of the seventy : but to be a John, to lean on his breast, to lie in his bosom,—O how great a mercy ! 'Tis mercy to be new born, though one be but newly, and as one newly-born ; but to grow up to a perfect stature, to be a man in Christ Jesus,—O how great a mercy !—*IBID.*

"Now is the accepted time." Mercy is like the bow in the cloud which is seen only in the day. We look for it in vain in the night—it has vanished, and darkness is all around. So mercy, the most beautiful of God's attributes, is fully revealed, and shines above us in the glorious light of reve-

lation, and faith is at hand to point and direct our attention to her, *now*, all lovely and inviting: but the day of God's patience, and man's provocation is fast waning, the night is coming on, and then we shall look up, and, instead of the bow of mercy to guide us, we shall see clouds and darkness, storms and tempests mustering the wrath of the eternal God in the firmament of his power.

Meditation.

They usually thrive best who meditate most. Meditation is a soul-fattening duty; it is a grace-strengthening duty. Guion calls it the muse of prayer. Hierome calls it his paradise. Basil calls it the treasury where all his graces are locked up. Theophylact calls it the very gate or portal by which we enter into glory: and Aristotle, though a heathen, places happiness in the contemplation of the mind.

Men that are sick and weakly in their bodies do not altogether abstain from food and physic, but rather use them that they may recover strength again: and though their appetite is small, yet they force themselves, that by eating a little, and a little, they may get a stomach. Shall a man that is dim-sighted shut the windows because the house is dark? shall he not rather open them to let in the light, that he may the better see to go about his business? and the colder a man feels himself, the more needful he thinks it to come to the fire, or use some exercise, that so he may recover his natural heat. Thus, in like manner, the sight of our natural wants and weaknesses is not a sufficient plea to bar us from the exercise of divine meditation, but rather incite us thereunto, it being an excellent means to clear up our sight, to enlighten our minds with more knowledge, to get spiritual health and strength, and to warm our cold and frozen hearts, that so by God's assistance we may perform service unto him with more heat of godly zeal and fervour of devotion.—
SPENCER.

As in heating of an oven, the fuel is set on fire, yet not without some pains to blow it up into a flame ; but afterwards, when the oven begins to be somewhat hot, the fuel will catch and kindle of itself ; and no sooner is it thrown in, but it is all in a blaze on a sudden. Such is the difficulty of meditation at the first ; when there is but (as it were) a *little spark* of love in the heart, it will cost a man some pains to blow it up into a flame ; but afterwards, when the heart is once heated with the flames of love, then it will inflame all the thoughts, and set the affections on fire, insomuch that the duty of meditation will not be only easy and delightful, but so necessary, that a man cannot tell how to avoid it.—IBID.

Meditation will give strength to our purposes. Reason is the strongest when it is most in action. Now meditation stirs up reason into act. Before, it was a standing water, which moves nothing else when itself moves not ; but now it is as the speedy stream which bears down all before it. Before, it was as the still and silent air, but now it is as the powerful motion of the wind, and overpowers the opposition of the flesh and of the devil. Before, it was as the stone, which lies still in the brook, but now, when meditation sets us to work, it is as the stone out of David's sling which smites down the Goliath of unbelief. That may be accomplished by a weaker motion continued, which will not by a stronger at the first attempt. To run a few steps will not get a man heat, but walking an hour together may. So, though a sudden occasional thought will not raise our affections to any spiritual heat, yet meditation can continue our thoughts, and lengthen our walk till our hearts grow warm.

This duty is very advantageous. You know a garden that is watered by sudden showers is more uncertain in its fruit than when 'tis refreshed by a constant stream ; so when our thoughts are sometimes upon good things, and then run off ; when they do but take a glance, as it were, upon holy objects, and then run away, there is not such fruit brought into the soul as when our minds by meditation do dwell upon them. The rays of the sun may warm us, but they do not inflame unless they are contracted in a burning-glass ; so some slight thoughts

of heavenly things may warm us a little, but will never inflame the soul till they be fixed by close meditation. Therefore David (who was an excellent man at this duty) tells us, his "heart was fixed," and saith the same concerning the frame of a good man.

Occasional meditation is, when the soul spiritualises every object, when the understanding is like an alembic that distils something from every object it sees and views, for the good of the soul. This is that spiritual chemistry that turns all metals into gold. Our blessed Saviour was a most eminent example of this; he drew spiritual matter from natural objects; the gospel is full of parables upon this account. A Christian should labour to see all things in God, and God in all things. Every stream should lead him to the fountain. Deliberate meditation is like the cultivation of an estate of which we know the value, and which yields to us a sure and certain profit.

Occasional meditation will be a means to cure the most vicious part of our lives; for what is the wickedest part of a man's life? it is his vain thoughts. As in nature there is no vacuity or emptiness, but a vessel is either filled with liquor or the air; now the more water you pour in, the more air goes out. So, if you would but store your souls with these occasional meditations, it would thrust out vain and wild thoughts. Oh! 'tis a rare temper when a Christian is always upon the wing. When he is like the beams of the sun; they touch the earth, but the body of the sun is fixed in heaven. So 'tis with a Christian when he converseth with the world, but dwells in God.

Continue to meditate till you find some sensible benefit conveyed to your soul. The nature of man has a great disrelish of this duty, and we are apt to be soon weary of it; our thoughts are like a bird in the cage, which flutters the more because of his confinement; so our thoughts are apt to run strayingly out when we confine them to such a duty as this is; but he that begins, and doth not proceed, loses the benefit of the duty. As it is in the kindling of fire in wet wood, you know continuance is that which must cause the flame. When you blow at first, there's a little smoke arises; by holding on, you raise sparks; but he that goes forward, at

last brings it to a flame. So 'tis in the duty of meditation ; when you begin to meditate upon spiritual things, at first you raise a smoke, a few sighs towards God ; by continuance you raise some sparks of heavenly desires ; but at last there's a flame of holy affections that goes up towards God. Now you should not ordinarily leave the work till the flame doth so ascend. When a man goes forth in a calm and serene evening, and views the face of the heavens, he shall see a star or two twinkle and peep forth ; but if he continues, both their number and lustre is increased, and at last he sees the whole heaven is bespangled with stars in every part ; so when thou dost meditate upon the promises of the gospel, at first it may be one star begins to appear, a little light conveys itself to thy heart ; but go forwards, and then thou will find, when thy thoughts are amplified and ripened, there will be a clear light ; more conveyed to thy soul ; and in continuance the covenant of grace will appear bespangled with promises as heaven with stars, and all to give thee satisfaction.

As meditation opens the understanding, and presents truth to the mind, so it raiseth the affections. Knowledge, without meditation to warm the affections, is like the glancing of a beam upon a wave—it fills it with a little clarity, but it doth not heal it ; so, when there are many notions of truth in the brain, if meditation doth not apply them to the heart, and fix them upon the soul, the affections have no warmth by them. Slight visions make shallow impressions. He that with a careless eye looks upon a piece of embroidery, does not see the curiousness of the work, and therefore doth not admire it. So when we with a running eye look upon the truths of the gospel, no wonder our affections are not raised towards them. David, speaking concerning his meditation, says, "*while I was musing, the fire burned, my heart was hot within me.*" 'Tis musing makes this fire to burn.

Meditation before prayer matures our conceptions, and quickens our desires. Our heart is like a watch that is soon run down, and needs constant winding up. It is an instrument that is easily put out of tune. And meditation is like

the tuning of an instrument, and setting it for the harmony of prayer. What is the reason that in prayer there is such a slight discurrency in our thoughts, that our thoughts are like dust in the wind, carried to and fro; but only for want of meditation? What is the reason that our desires, like an arrow shot by a weak bow, do not reach the mark? But only this, we do not meditate before prayer; he that would but consider, before he comes to pray to the pure majesty of God, the thing that he is to pray for, pardon of sin, and the life of glory, how would this cause his prayers to ascend like incense towards God? The great reason why our prayers are ineffectual, is because we do not meditate before them. David expresseth prayer by meditation; "*Give ear to my words, O Lord, consider my meditation.*"

Any benefit to be derived from hearing the word, exceedingly depends on meditation. Before we hear the word, meditation is like a plough, which opens the ground to receive the seed, and after we have heard the word, it is like the harrow which covers the new-sown seed in the earth, that the fowls of the air may not pick it up: meditation is that which makes the word full of life and energy to our souls. What is the reason that most men come to hear the word as the beasts did in *Noah's* ark? They came in unclean, and they went out unclean. The reason is, because they do not meditate on the truths they hear; it is but just like putting money into a bag with holes, presently it falls out: so the truths they hear preached are put into shallow neglected memories, and they do not draw them forth by meditation, therefore hearing the word is so little effectual: it is said, "*Mary pondered these things in her heart.*" Hearing the word merely is like indigestion, and when we meditate upon the word, that's digestion; and this digestion of the word by meditation produces warm affections, zealous resolutions, and holy actions; and therefore if you desire to profit by hearing the word, meditate.

Meditation, as it advances the graces of the soul, so the comforts of the soul. God conveys comfort to us in a rational way; and although he is able to rain manna in the wilderness, and to cast in comfort to our souls, without any

labour of ours, yet usually he dispenseth comforts according to the standing rule. He that doth not work, shall not eat—he that doth not labour in the duties of religion, shall not taste the sweetness of religion. Now meditation is the serious and active performance of the soul to which God hath promised comfort. I will open this by this consideration. The promises of the gospel do not convey comfort to us as they are recorded in the word merely, but as they are applied by meditation. I will illustrate it by this similitude. The grapes, while they hang upon the vine, do not produce that wine which cheers the heart of man; but when they are squeezed in the wine-press, then they yield forth their liquor, which is of such a cheering nature. So the promises which are in the word barely, do not send forth that sovereign juice which cheers our hearts; but when we ponder them in our souls, and press them by meditation, then the promises convey the water of life to us. There is an expression of David which suits with this, Ps. lxxiii. compare the 5th and 6th verses, “*When I remember thee upon my bed, and meditate on thee in the night-watches, my soul shall be satisfied as with marrow and fatness:*” observe the connexion. Meditation turns the promises into marrow, it conveys the strength of them to our souls. One morsel of meat masticated and digested, dispenses more nourishment than a greater quantity that is swallowed down whole; so one promise that is ruminated upon, and digested by meditation, conveys more comfort than a bundle of promises in the head that are not meditated upon, which we do not consider. Nay, consider this, the comfort which meditation brings is the most spiritual refined joy that we are capable of. It is spiritual meditation which rejoices the angelical part of our souls within us. Indeed meditation is that which makes a man to be a citizen of the new Jerusalem; he can take a walk in the paradise of God every day, and pluck fruits off the tree of life, and draw water from the wells of salvation. He that performs conscientiously the duty of meditation, doth maintain such a correspondence with God as angels do: such a one doth enter into heaven by degrees and steps.

To have the benefit of meditation, we must labour for a pure heart. "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God." When they draw nigh unto him, he will manifest himself unto them. Sin defiles, and dims the soul. A soiled glass yields no clear representation of things; upon this account, because sin, as it darkens the understanding, so it unfits the soul to receive any benefit by this duty. That cloth which is white is receptive of any colour; but that which is black will not change. So here, when the heart is cleansed and purified from the stains of sin, it will be moulded into the form of any truth the soul meditates upon; but when the blackness of sin is there, it is not receptive of any colour, except with difficulty.

There are some points in religion which are chiefly speculative; there are others which are more practical. Now as the tops of mountains are barren, but the humble valleys fruitful, so speculative points are barren, and the meditation of them is ineffective. There are some slight dishes which gratify the palate, but have no substance in them to feed and strengthen the body; so there are some truths which though they are delicious, yet they do not produce holiness; and although they may please the taste, yet they yield no solid nourishment to the soul. We lose much of the benefit of meditation, when we pitch our thoughts upon those objects which are not most fruitful. Hence, meaner Christians often thrive more in holiness than those of richer gifts; they meditate upon those objects most fruitfully in reference to their lives, and so they make a sensible progress in the ways of religion, whereas others are barren.

Ministry—Means of Grace.

Gospel ministers do, indeed, in some sense, turn the world upside down. The fall of Adam has turned human nature

upside down long ago ; and converting grace must turn us upside down again, in order to bring us right.

The archer first takes a view of his mark ; then considers the distance of the ground ; after that he carries his eye over all the shafts in his quiver, he pulls out, and puts in one after another, until he has made choice of his arrow ; then he proves it with his finger, and judges by his ear whether it be fit to fly to the mark : when he hath put his arrow into the bow, and begun to draw, if there come a gust of contradiction in his way, he hath the discretion to bear with it till it have spent itself ; when the blast is over, he sets his foot to the ground, draws his arrow up to the head, and sticks it up to the feathers. Thus it is that preaching is a kind of artillery exercise, that requireth strength and knowledge, ministers a kind of archers, and the souls of men are the fairest marks that can be shot at ; but it so cometh to pass, that many, for want of growth to draw the bow of prophets and apostles, or want of skill to shoot, or care to shoot when they have taken their aim, many times miss the mark, being either short or wide, and so become despised.—SPENCER.

Two things are considerable in a minister, his sufficiency, but people take little heed to his authority ; and therefore come they to church rather to judge than to be judged, forgetting that many may be as skilful, but none can be so powerful, in “ binding and loosing,” as is the minister. A judge, or a justice of peace, may have less law in him than a private man, but he hath much more power, and they that appear before him regard his acts according to his power. So should it be in the church. But men fear the magistrates that are under earthly kings, because the pains which they inflict are corporal ; our hands, our feet, feel their manacles and fetters. And did but our souls as truly feel, as indeed they should, the pastor’s binding and loosing of them, we should make more account of those offices than we do. And it were good we did so ; for they so bind as that they can loose again ; but if we neglect them, when our Lord and Master cometh he will command all contemners to be bound hand and foot, that they shall never be loosed again.—IBID.

It is a pretty story of Demosthenes; when one told him that he was beaten and abused by such a man, it seems he told it very dreamingly and coldly, showing no affection at all. "Why," saith Demosthenes, "hath he beaten thee? I do not believe it." "No!" saith the man, and so grew into a very great passion. "I am sure thus and thus he did to me, and do not you call this beating?" "Nay," saith Demosthenes, "now I believe that he hath beaten thee indeed, now thou speakest as if it were true what thou sayest." So when a minister preacheth unto people in a dreaming manner, standing in a pulpit as though he were saying of his lesson, though the things he saith be never so weighty, yet the people will not believe him; but when he is earnestly zealous in God's message, when he preacheth as one having authority, then it is that the people's hearts may be said to burn within them.—IBID.

There are many in the kingdom to be found that could do the prince's errand ('tis like) as well as his ambassador, but none takes the place but he that is sent, and can show his letters credential. Those that are not sent and commissioned by God's call for the ministerial work, they may speak truth as well as they that are; yet of him that acts by virtue of his calling we may say, that he preacheth with authority, and not like those that can show no commission, but what the opinion they themselves have of their own abilities give them.—IBID.

Our people complain that we are so much, so often reproving the same error or sin, and the guilt is their own, because they will not leave it: who will blame the dog for continuing to bark when the thief is all the while in the yard? Alas, alas! it is not once or twice proclaiming against sin that will do it.

Short hints and away may please a scholar, but not so profitable for others; the one more fit for schools, but the other for the pulpit. Were I to buy a garment in a shop, I should like him better who lays one good piece or two before me that are for my turn, (which I may fully peruse,) than him who takes down all his shop, and heaps piece upon

piece merely to show his store, till at last, for variety, I can look wistfully on none, they lie so one upon another.

A holy violence in preachers is but a true zeal for the souls of men, and if they do you violence it is no more than if they pull your arm out of joint, when to save you from drowning they pull you out of a river; and if you complain, it is no more to be regarded than the outcries of children against their rulers, or sick men against their physicians.

To expect perfection in ministers is to except against the wisdom of God. In a pipe which conveys water into a house there may be such a flaw as will sometimes admit some dust or earth to mix itself with the water; will you therefore reject the water itself, and say, that if you may not have it just as it ariseth in the fountain, you will not regard it, when you live far from the fountain itself, and can have no water but what is conveyed in pipes liable to such defects?

Memorable is the story of Pyrrhus, a merchant of Ithaca, who on a time seeing an aged man captive in a pirate's ship, took compassion on him, and redeemed him, and with him bought likewise his commodity, which the pirate had taken from him, being certain barrels of pitch. The old man perceiving that not for any service that he could do him, nor for the gain of his commodity, but merely out of charity Pyrrhus had done this, presently discovered unto him a great mass of treasure hidden in the pitch, whereby he grew exceeding wealthy, having not without divine providence obtained an unexpected blessing for so good an act of piety. Now, if God so bountifully requite the redemption of a poor old man from a corporal servitude, how much rather should every man contend to the utmost of his power, ministers in the pulpit, magistrates on their benches, masters in their families, every one by a good example to win a soul unto God, to redeem his brother from the thralldom of Satan, which is to save a soul from death! And for which they shall be honoured with the name of saviours, and their reward shall be, that they shall shine like stars, for ever and ever.—IBID.

A minister has a variety of cases to attend to, and much

care and attention must be given to this matter, or many of the flock committed to him will be neglected. He is like an artist who has a number of unfinished portraits in different stages of perfection to attend to. Or, suppose a sculptor surrounded by his busts: if he should give all his attention to a few, which were already highly advanced, it is evident that those figures which he had done but little with must be neglected. On the other hand, if he should confine his attentions to the latter, those on which he had been so long employed would never be finished; while, if he gave all his time to those he had made some progress with, it is certain that no new work of art could be entered on. But should he have a rage to be always beginning new busts, and forgetting the others, none of his works could be carried forwards to their necessary completion. Thus, let a minister give only strong meat, and preach to the more advanced Christians; they who need only the milk of the gospel must suffer from want of their proper food. If he attend only to the latter, and leave out the deep things of God, the former class must stand still. Should he preach only to the Lord's people, the unconverted must be abandoned to their fate. And lastly, should he (*like too many*) preach *only*, or *almost* so, to the latter, then it is equally certain that the members of Christ's flock must be grievously neglected. He is "the wise steward who giveth to every one their meat in due season," who declares the *whole* counsel of God.

The duty of "in any wise rebuking our neighbour, and not suffering sin upon him," should be considered as an ordinance to which Christ has a special regard. But how much more is it incumbent on the pastor of a flock! Suppose a shepherd to be in attendance upon his flock. He will be careful to provide for them good pasturage and waters; and when one pasture is consumed he will drive them into another. All their wants will be attended to. But let one or two sheep break their fences, and wander far away, his care and attention will be immediately directed towards them. He will not consider it sufficient to have attended them on the whole as a flock, but he will not lose

sight of the stragglers till he has brought them back (if possible) into the fold. Just so, it is not enough for God's ministers to exhort the flock in general, and warn and condemn them in his public ministrations—but he must be privy to the secret faults and backslidings of the individual members, and follow them to their dwellings with the hope of reclaiming them by showing to them their transgressions. This is not to pry curiously into his people's failings; much less maliciously to search into doubtful unknown things; but to exhibit a shepherd's care and watchfulness, without which he can carry out but half of his ministerial office. And let the people especially give heed that they respect this ordinance of a rebuker, and despise not Christ in his ministering servant.

The apostle saith, that ministers of God are "worthy of double honour," and doubtless the very heathen shall rise up in judgment against many who profess the truth, in this respect; for the heathen themselves did show so much honour to their devilish priests, that one of the Roman consuls seeing a priest and some virgins going on foot, and him riding on his chariot, descended, and would not go into it again, till those diabolical votaries were first placed; nay, the very kings and emperors in Greece, Egypt, Rome, &c., thought it one of the greatest honours to be withal the priests of the people. Amongst the Christians, when the Synod of Nice was assembled at Constantine's command, and some accusations, or (as the historian calleth them) calumniations, were presented to the emperor against some bishops and ministers, he looked not on the particulars, but sealed them up with his own signet; and having first reconciled the parties, commanded the libels to be burnt, adding withal, that if he should himself see a bishop in adultery, he would cover his nakedness with his own royal robe; "Because," saith he, "the sins of such men ought not to be divulged, lest their example do as much hurt to the souls of others, as their fact to their own: for as a good life is necessary for themselves, so is their good fame necessary for others."—SPENCER.

There is a record, that that holy martyr of Jesus Christ,

Bishop Latimer, having, in a sermon at court in the days of Henry the Eighth, much displeased the king, he was commanded next Sunday after to preach again, and make his recantations. According to appointment he comes to preach, and prefaceth to his sermon with a kind of dialogism in this manner: "Hugh Latimer, dost thou know to whom thou art this day to speak?—to the high and mighty monarch, the king's most excellent majesty, &c., that can take away thy life if thou offend; therefore take heed how thou speakest a word that may displease;" but as it were recalling himself, "Hugh, Hugh," saith he, "dost thou know from whence thou comest, upon whose message thou art sent, and who it is that is present with thee, and beholdest all thy ways?—even the great and mighty God, that is able to cast both body and soul into hell for ever; therefore look about thee, and be sure that thou deliver thy message faithfully," &c., and so comes on to his sermon; and what he had delivered the day before, confirms and urges with more vehemence than ever. The sermon being ended, the court was full of expectation what would be the issue of the matter. After dinner the king called for Latimer, and with a stern countenance asked him how he durst be so bold as to preach after that manner? He answered and said, that duty to God and his prince had enforced him thereunto, and now he had discharged his conscience and duty both, in what he had spoken, his life was in his majesty's hands. Upon this the king rose from his seat, and taking the good man from his knees, embraced him in his arms, saying, he blessed God that he had a man in his kingdom that durst deal so plainly and faithfully with him. Thus did but all men, especially ministers, such as are immediately employed by God, seriously take notice of his omnipresence, and continually remember how his eye is always upon them, O how diligent! how confident! how abundant would it make them in the work of the Lord! how faithful! how courageous! how unbiassed! how above the frowns and smiles of the greatest of the sons of men!—IBID.

There is a story of Demosthenes, who, speaking to the

Athenians on a very serious matter, and finding them not regarding his words, interrupted himself, and told them that he had some special thing to relate, to which he would fain have them to attend: whereupon silence being made, that which he told them was this: "Two men," saith he, "having bargained for the hire of an ass, were travelling from Athens to Megara in a very hot day; and both striving to enjoy the shadow of the ass, the one said that he hired the ass and the shadow too; the other said, he did but hire the ass, and not the shadow." Thus leaving them at strife, Demosthenes went away; but the Athenians called him with great eagerness to come back, and to end the tale. Upon his return, that which he said was this: "O ye Athenians, will ye attend unto me speaking of a shadow and an ass, and will ye not attend unto me speaking of the most important things?" Now how justly may this be the reproof of many in our days, such as tithe-mint, anise, and cummin, and let pass the more substantial fruits of the law, such as have an ear for vanity, but not for truth; that attend to things of folly, but not to the matters of salvation; hence it is that wisdom cries out in the streets, and few regard it; but if folly once appears, there will be many to follow her instructions.—IBID.

If a man have the atrophy, a disease so called, so that his food affords no nourishment, what strength and vigour of body and senses is this man like to have? Indeed, he may well eat more than a sounder man, and the small abode that it makes in the stomach may refresh it at the present, and may help to draw out a lingering, languishing, uncomfortable life. Thus many hearers there are that are sick of this disease; what they hear is quickly forgotten; perhaps they hear more than otherwise they needed, and the clear discovery, and lively delivering of the truth of God may warm and refresh them a little whilst they are hearing; but perhaps an hour or two after, it may be, may linger out their grace in a languishing, uncomfortable life. But if they did hear one hour, and meditate seven, if they did as constantly ruminare and digest their sermons as they hear them, they would find another manner of benefit by

sermons than the ordinary sort of many forward Christians do.—IBID.

Two walking together found a young tree laden with fruit; both did gather and satisfy themselves for the present. One of them took all the remaining fruit, and carried it away with him; the other, seeing him gone with the fruit, took up the tree itself, and planted it in his own ground, where it prospered, and bore plentifully every year: the first had more fruit at the present, but the other sped best; for he had fruit when the other had none. Thus it is with men at the hearing of sermons, some have large memories, and can gather many observations which they keep awhile to rehearse, not to practise. Another hath a weaker capacity; but he gets the tree itself, the root and substance of the text, plants it in his heart, feeds on the fruits with comfort, and his soul is thereby nourished unto life eternal.—IBID.

As market folk returning from the market will be talking of their markets as they go by the way, and be casting up their accounts when they come home, reckon what they have taken, and what they have laid out, and how much they have gotten; so should we, after we have heard the word publicly, confer privately of it with others; at least meditate on it by ourselves, how we have profited that day by the word that hath been spoken to us, and also by our religious exercises that have been used by us. And as the market-man counteth that but an ill market-day that he has not gained somewhat more or less, so may we well account it an ill sabbath-day to us whereon we have not profited somewhat, whereon we have not increased our knowledge, or been bettered by our affections; whereon we have not been either informed in judgment, or reformed in practice; whereon we have added nothing to our talent.—IBID.

Mark the jailors; they often suffer their prisoners to have their hands and feet free, neither are they in any fear that they will make an escape, so long as the prison doors are sure locked and fast barred. Thus dealeth Satan with those men that he holdeth in his captivity. He letteth

them sometimes have their hands at liberty to reach out an alms to the poor ; and sometimes their feet at liberty to go to church to hear the word preached ; but he will be sure to keep their ears, which are the gates and doors of their soul, so close made up, that they shall hear nothing to their comfort ; and if they go, it shall be to little purpose.—**IBID.**

Many men take no pleasure in flowers, nor care any further for them than to look upon them, smell to them, and have them in their hands ; but the bees draw honey from them, both honey and wax ; and the skilful apothecary maketh many medicines of them against divers and sundry diseases. Thus, many hear sermons only for their pleasure, for the elegance of their style, delicacy of the words, smoothness of the language, and gracefulness of the delivery ; this is but to make a nosegay to smell to for a while, and cast it anon after into a corner ; to “ hear the word gladly,” but in time of temptation fall away.—**IBID.**

Grace is contented with the simplicity of the gospel ; gifts are not contented therewithal. And therefore you shall observe that the Corinthians, who excelled in gifts, adulterated the gospel with their swelling words. The Galatians adulterated the doctrine of the gospel, and mingled the doctrine of the gospel with justification by works. The Corinthians mingled the words of the gospel with their own swelling language. They had gifts, and they were not contented with the simplicity of the gospel. Ay, but grace is. You see how it is with a child that comes into a corn-field ; he is mightily taken with the blue or red weeds, or the daisies that grow there ; but now when a man comes—the husbandman comes, he looks at the corn, and is not so much taken with the blue and red weeds, or the company of daisies, but is taken with the corn itself. So now take a man that hath gifts only, and bringhim to a sermon or a prayer ; and if there be any fine expressions, any daisies, he is much taken with them ; he prizeth, and magnifieth them, and he hangs on them. But now bring a man that hath grace to a prayer, or to a sermon, and he looks at the corn ; he doth not look at the daisies so much, but at the

spirituality and power of those things that are there delivered.

The atmosphere, or that body of air which encompasses our globe forty-five miles every way, is equally important to the life of animals, and to the vegetation of plants. But it would quickly cease to answer these valuable ends, were it not for the additional influence of the sun. Whereas, in subordination to that, and as a medium between that and us, it ministers every moment to our best temporal interests. Thus, the ordinances of the gospel are to be numbered among those streams which gladden the church of God, when he makes them the vehicles of his own power and presence to the soul. Abstracted from the converting, and cherishing operations of the Holy Ghost, the best means of grace would infallibly leave us (as a sunless atmosphere would leave the earth) no less cold and unanimated than they found us.

It is probable that Venus, like Mercury, has no attending satellite, or moon. Cassini, indeed, in the last century, thought he had discovered one; but he seems to have been mistaken. Venus's vicinity to the sun seems to render the services of such a companion unnecessary. Just as in the world of the blessed, the saints will need no ministry of the word, nor other means of grace; because they will then walk in the light of the Lamb, and with open face behold the glory of the Lord.

Success in spiritual things, as well as in temporal, is made to depend on diligence. The words of our Saviour are, "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find." Suppose we should come to an extensive common which must be crossed in the way to a city seen in the distance, and found it intersected by paths going in various directions, each path so obstructed by briars and thorns, that its route could scarcely be traced: suppose we there saw two travellers, both professing a desire to reach the city; one diligently tries every path that appears to lead in the right direction, and when he finds the one he is in diverging to the right hand or the left, he quits it, and tries another. "If I keep my eye steadily fixed on the city," he says, "I know

I cannot go far out of the way ; and hope, at length, to find a straight path leading to it." This man, you would say, acted in a rational manner. But what would you think of the traveller, if you saw him, with his back to the city, contentedly walking in a path that evidently led in a direction exactly opposite? He might tell you that it was impossible for him to discover the right path ; that he hoped he might find some one to show it to him, and in the mean time he did not think it signified what direction he walked in. Would you think the conduct of this man rational? And yet such is the conduct of many who profess they wish to become real Christians, while they constantly employ themselves in matters that lead them away from Christ, and foster the corruptions of their hearts.

There is mention made of a prince in Germany, who, being invaded by a more potent enemy than himself, yet from his friends and allies (who flocked unto his help) he soon had a goodly army, but had no money, as he said, to pay them ; but the truth is, he was loth to part with it ; for which cause some went away discontented, others did not vigorously mind his business, and so he was soon beaten out of his kingdom ; and his coffers (when his palace was rifled) were found to be filled with treasure. And thus was he ruined, as some sick men die, because unwilling to be at cost to pay the physician. Now so it is, that few or none are to be found but would be glad their souls might be saved at last ; but where is the man or woman that makes it appear by their vigorous endeavour that they mean in earnest? What cost or expense will they put themselves to? What will they part with? What warlike preparation do they make against Satan, who lies between them and home? Where are their arms, where their skill to use them, their resolution to stand to them, and conscionable care to exercise themselves daily in the use of them? Thus to do is a rarity indeed ; if wouling, and wishing would bring them to heaven, then they may likely come thither ; but as for this diligence in the ways of God, this circumspect walking, this wrestling and fighting, this making re-

ligion our business, they are as far from these, as at last in so doing they are like to be from heaven.—SPENCER.

How early do men rouse up their servants to their labour! “Up, come away to work, we have this to do, and that to do;” but how seldom do they call them, “Up, you have your souls to look to, you have everlasting life to provide for; up to prayer, to the reading of the Scriptures! Alas, how rare is this language! What a gadding up and down the world is here, like a company of ants upon a hillock, taking incessant pains to gather a treasure which death, as the next passenger that comes by, will spurn abroad; as if it were such an excellent thing to die in the midst of wealth and honours! Or, if it would be such a comfort to a man at death, or in another world, to think that he was a lord, a knight, or a gentleman, or a rich man on earth! And as a man whose spirits are seized on by some pestilential malignity is feeble and faint, and heartless in all that he does, so the spirits of these men being possessed by the plague of this malignant worldly disposition—O how faint are they in secret prayer! O how superficial in examination and meditation!

The various ordinances are the props, and stay of a gracious spirit, and serve for its support. Brambles will grow of themselves, and need no assistance,—but the vine needs a prop. Dogs and wolves may wander far and wide abroad,—but sheep need the fold.

Most men go away with the husk and shell of an ordinance, and neglect the kernel, please themselves because they have been in the courts of the Lord's house, though they have not met with the living God. This is sad! A traveller and merchant differ thus. A traveller goes from place to place, that he may see and be amused; but a merchant goes from port to port, that he may take in his lading, and grow rich by trade. So a formal person goes from ordinance to ordinance, and is satisfied with the work; a godly man looks to take rich lading, that he may go away, and take with him some of the spiritual wealth of the sanctuary; go from God with God, that he may meet God here, and

there, in this duty and in that. A man that makes a visit only by constraint, and not by friendship, it is all one to him whether the person be at home or not, but another would be glad to find his friend there ; so if we are not formalists, but come to God from a principle of love in these duties, our desires will be to find the living God.

Without ordinances there can be no spiritual wealth or prosperity in the church. Deprive the church of her frequent ordinances, and she will resemble a magnificent and extensive estate, loaded with the most abundant crops, but without any barns standing on it where the produce may be gathered in. Here, however fertile the soil, or however the finest skill in agriculture may be brought into play, all must fall into loss and ruin. So, though the church is rich in promises, in the gifts and graces of the Spirit, and in her continual Intercessor, yet without her frequent ordinances and means of grace all her spiritual treasures would remain unappropriated, and the members of her body would be starved, and perish in the midst of plenty.

Outward observances, indispensable as they are, are not religion ; they are its aliment, but not its life : the fuel, but not the flame ; the scaffolding, but not the edifice.

To condemn God's ordinances for not effecting profit in us, and not rather to look for the cause in ourselves, is as if some one should imprudently accuse that physic for useless and unfit, that is not suffered to work by the incapacity, the ill diet, the weak stomach, or some evil accident of the patient.

If the wounded Jew in the parable should have cast away the twopence which the Samaritan left to provide for him, it had been an argument that he neither regarded him nor his kindness. And it was a sign that Esau loved not God, because he esteemed not his birthright. Thus the true love of God is far from us if we set not a high esteem upon his ordinances, those pledges of his favour which he hath left with us, to wit, the word and sacraments ; *the word*, wherein we hear him speak lovingly,—and the sacraments, wherein we see him speak comfortably to us ; the one to heal us of

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our *wounds*, the *other*, an earnest of the blessings which we had forfeited by sin.—SPENCER.

Means.

Overlooking the connexion between means and end, men make the rewards of virtue dependant on chance. Their deception in regard to means is the facility with which fancy passes along the train of them, glances at the accomplishment, overlooking the successive stages, the labour and hazards of retracted, slow process from each point to the next. If a given number of years are allowed requisite for the accomplishment of an object, the thoughtless vaults from one last day of December to another, and seizes at once the whole product of all the intermediate days, without condescending to recollect, that the sun never shone yet on three hundred and sixty-five days at once, and that they must be slowly told, and laboured one by one. If a favourite plan is to be accomplished by means of a certain large amount of property to be produced from what is at present a very small one; the calculation of a sanguine mind can change shillings into guineas, and guineas into hundreds of pounds a thousand times faster than in the actual experiment these lazy shillings and guineas can multiply themselves. It is thus when men think they can at once attain to, and step into those habits, feelings, and principles which are of slow and difficult attainment. They forget that religion is a plant of slow growth, and requires much time to bring forth "fruit unto perfection."

In vain do the inhabitants of London go to their conduits for supply, unless the man who has the master-key turns the water on. And in vain do we think to quench our thirst at ordinances, unless God communicates the living water of his Spirit.

As presumptuous sins are the thieves that with a high hand rob the Christian of his comfort, so sloth and negligence are the rust that in time will fret into his comfort, and eat

out the heart and strength of it. It is impossible that the Christian who is careless and secure in his walking, infrequent or negligent in his communion with God, should long be owner of much peace and comfort. What if thou dost not pour water of presumptuous sins into the lamp of thy joy to quench it, 'tis enough if thou dost not pour oil of duty to feed and maintain it. Thou art a murderer to thy comfort by starving it, as well as by stabbing it.

A just consideration of the nature of the soul would show us the value and importance of a sound and judicious treatment of it. The soul is a living creature; and all analogies teach us that the principle of life in every living thing can only be supported by its own peculiar aliment, and its health maintained by studying its economy. In the body there is a continual wasting and reparation of its substance going on. It is the same with the soul that is alive unto God. Withhold food, and rest, and exercise from it, and the strongest body will decay; withhold from the soul the means of grace, and it will decay. If prophesying be despised, the spirit will be quenched: 1 Thes. v. 19, 20: yea, "where there is no vision the people will decay;" yea, if we do not daily by all good means exhort, and stir up ourselves, we are in danger of being hardened. Again, as it is with the body, by poisoning, or wounding it, the life of it, if it be not destroyed, yet will be endangered, the health and strength of it greatly impaired; so it is with the soul, by sinning against conscience (which is as poison, and a stab to it) it is greatly impaired. See this in the case of David and Peter, after they had yielded once to sin against conscience they grow weaker and weaker. And though the soul that is born again can never die, yet it may receive such bruises and wounds as to live on under the loss of the sense of God's favour, which is to the believer more than all the world. Ps. iv. 6, 7; Cant. i. 2.

Long interruptions in the use of our religious duties will hinder the fruits of them; when there are gaps and strides between the performance of duties, we lose the benefit of them. As it is with our bodies, if a man make a free and liberal meal, this will not maintain his body to-morrow, and

a day after; but he must have constant food, else nature languishes and decays; so if you are delighted to-day, but should neglect to be so for many days after, you will lose the benefit of it, and the soul decays and languishes. If the bird leaves her nest for a long space, the eggs chill, and are not fit for production; but when there's a constant incubation, then they bring forth; so, when we leave religious duties for a long space, our affections chill, and grow cold; and are not fit to produce holiness and comfort to our souls; but when we are constant in this work, then shall we find the advantage of it.

Suppose a physician who is sent for to a sick patient should give the messenger an electuary to carry with him, and saith, "It will be some time before I come myself to the sick man, but charge him to take a good quantity of this as oft as he finds himself ill every day till I come, and he shall do well." Now the patient begins to follow his physician's directions, but staying longer than he likes before he comes, and finding his trouble continue, sets it aside, and takes no more of it. The physician at last sets forth, and as he is on his way to him, hears of it, and turns back, and comes not to him; so the poor man dies by his own hasty folly. Such is the folly of him who neglects perseverance in prayer, and constant diligence in the use of those means which God has prescribed for our recovery from sin, and growth in grace.—SPENCER.

Mortification.

A living member is not burthensome to the body. A man's arms are not any burthen to him, though otherwise massy and weighty; but a withered arm, or a limb mortified, hangeth like a lump of lead on it. Thus, so long as sin liveth in the soul, not destroyed, and unmortified as yet, so long our corruption is nothing at all cumbersome unto us; but when it is once mortified in a man, it beginneth to

grow burthensome unto him, and to hang like a lump of dead flesh on his soul, and then beginneth the poor man, pestered, and oppressed with the weight of it, to cry out with the apostle, "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me from the body of this death?" Rom. vii. 24.—

SPENCER.

There were two altars in Solomon's temple; one in the outer court, where beasts were sacrificed; in the inner court, an altar of incense: the first represented mortification, or the slaying of our bestial appetites; the other, the offering up our prayers, which will not be pleasing unless our impurities are removed by the first sacrifice; without our spirit be mortified, we can neither love to pray, nor God love to hear us.

Mortification is a part of religion which seems so indispensable for the health and prosperity of the inner man, that nothing will compensate for its neglect. Our graces can hardly flourish without it. Like the tree of Araby, which must be lanced before it gives forth plentifully its odoriferous gums, so the soul must be mortified before it can distil the sweetness of its virtues.

Carnal men pretend they can as easily stop the circulation of the blood as mortify their sensual inclinations. But the command is plain and peremptory, to pluck out the right eye, and cut off the right hand. The impotency to obey lies in obstinacy, and unwillingness to follow this command of Christ. If one was warned of the danger of carrying gunpowder in his pocket, he could not reasonably complain if he was afterwards burnt from its explosion. Thus, if a man continues to feed his carnal affections, they become like gunpowder, a spark sets all on fire. So the traveller complained of the roughness of the way when a thorn in his foot made it uneasy. And carnal men complain 'tis impossible to obey the gospel, but their lusts make it so. Let the thorn be extracted, and the way is pleasant. Now its commands will not be counted grievous, and Christ's yoke will become a gracious yoke.

New Birth—New Creature.

To enjoy the bliss of heaven, we must have an inward meet-ness, as well as an outward righteousness. At Christ's second coming the Lord will only expand and enlarge that divine principle which the Holy Spirit now puts into the soul. He who is born again of the Spirit, is, by receiving a divine nature, as much made meet for the kingdom of heaven as a child who is born alive is, at its birth, made meet for living in this lower world. The child then possesses, though in an infantine state, a mind, will, and affections, all the parts of the body, soul, and spirit, which are essential in its after life. It is like the acorn, having the seed which is to germinate into all the grandeur of the future oak. Thus it is with him who is born of the Spirit. He is now made partaker of the divine nature; and that nature, its Divine Author will more and more unfold, and strengthen, till it is fully perfected by beholding him.

As seed virtually contains in it all that afterwards proceeds from it—the blade, stalk, ear, and full corn in the ear; so the first principle of grace implanted in the heart seminally contains all the grace which afterwards appears, and the fruits, effects, arts, and exercises of it.

One of the worst features of evil which belong to an unconverted state, is the unconsciousness of its condition. This natural disease so pervades the whole of the moral system, that, like the equal pressure of the atmosphere on a body, it is felt nowhere. But if you disturb this in part by the simple process of an air-pump, the pressure on the other parts will be intolerable, as the equilibrium will be destroyed. And so it is with the human mind—let but the sleep of spiritual death be disturbed by doubts, and fears of safety, and immediately there is consciousness and pain: let but the light of divine truth shine into the heart of an ungodly, uncon-

verted man, to give unto him the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and immediately his disease is discovered, and its pressure sorely felt. Self-loathing, and distress are the symptoms that attend the new birth.

There is a class of persons who openly betray their shame and folly, and manifest their utter indifference to their baptismal vows, and the work to which it calls them. Another, aroused perhaps from this condition, go zealously to work to purchase their salvation—to fabricate repentance and faith by their own power alone. Self-confident, self-sufficient, and filled with spiritual pride, they think to turn their own hearts to God, without receiving any new life from him. Brought back from their wanderings on one side, away they go immediately upon the other, in an error as dangerous, nay, as fatal as before. For after all it makes little difference, whether a man give up the kingdom of heaven altogether, or attempt to enter it without being “born again.” In either case he continues dead in trespasses and sins. The difference is that of a corpse with all the offensive accompaniments of death upon it—and that of a dead man embalmed, and his nakedness covered with goodly clothing; in the one case he lies in acknowledged lifelessness—in the other, his cadaverous form is clothed in the garments, and placed in the attitude, of life, so as to exclude the idea of death; but stiffened limbs, and a countenance of deathlike expression in the mummy, betray its case. No, *we must be born again of the Spirit.*

The early Christians have told us that in the first ages of the gospel, when an adult came to be baptized, he put off his old clothes before he went into the water, and put on new and clean raiment when he came out of it, to signify that he had put off his old and corrupt nature, and his former bad principles and corrupt practices, and become a new man. Have I “put off the old man,” &c.? Alas! I lament that there is so little of the spirit of the virtues of Christ about me. It shall not be always thus, so that “though we have lain among the pots, we shall appear as doves, whose wings are covered with silver, and their feathers with yellow gold.”

In all the works of God, order, beauty, and proportion

are evidently to be seen, and every particular part contributes to the beauty of the whole. This is remarkable in every object which we behold. That would be a most uncomely tree which was all branches and no leaf, or branches and leaves, and no flowers or fruit where we looked for it. In the human frame the different parts are beautifully ordered, connected, and proportioned. The new man in Christ is not less perfect and beautiful. A Christian is not a monster in form, but all his component parts have their being and growth together; they are beautifully connected and proportional. Like the different members of the same body, all the graces of the spirit are connected with Christ the head. True, one grace may be called into action more than another, and gain more strength, but no one grace grows alone. Those graces which act more immediately towards God in Christ will be accompanied by those corresponding graces which influence our conduct towards mankind. If we love God, we shall love man. If we are really humble before God, we shall be humble in our outward conduct towards our fellow-creatures. It is vain to pretend that we are really humbled before God, if our conduct towards man is proud and assuming. Then the order, beauty, and proportion of the new creature will appear, when it is with grace, as with the other works of God.

When the new convert opens his eyes to behold the moral wilderness and wreck which sin has made of all the noble faculties of his soul, he sees within himself a resemblance to winter, when no verdure quickens, and no fruits adorn the season. But in the spring, when, under the influence of a reviving temperature, fresh vitality seems infused into all the springs of nature, he may see a type of those beams of an eternal spring which now shine upon his soul, and which only serve to burst the buds, and unfold the blossoms of the fruits of righteousness. In this great restoration of nature we may discover a type of the soul's passing from a state of moral desolation to a new creation bursting into life. But what solace can the unconverted sinner derive from such reflections, or indeed from anything in this life-giving season. Nature only rises up to condemn him. It proclaims that the wintry curtain of spiritual death and

sleep still hangs over his soul. The leaves and flowers, the birds and breezes, and the balmy skies around him, can yield him no pleasure as long as he reflects that he must at length awake from his dream of folly, but only to learn the dreadful truth that for him eternity has no second spring.

Should the affections and the will want gracious principles, the new creature must want a heart—the old heart will not serve the turn—the new man is but half a man without a new heart. There was put into the breast-plate of judgment the urim and thummim—lights and perfections, both were in it, else it would not have been perfect. The full substance of this type was only in Christ, who was full of all grace and truth ; but there is an increase of it in every true Christian who puts on the breast-plate of faith and love. Faith is a kind of urim in his understanding, and love is a kind of thummim in his will—both together make up his complete breast-plate. But if there were not a gracious principle in his will and affections, we should have a urim without a thummim, light in the mind without integrity in the heart, and in consequence he could be but one-half of a Christian.

It is said of Argo, (the then royal sovereign of the Asiatic Seas,) that being upon constant service, she was constantly repaired, and as one plank or board failed, she was ever and anon supplied with another that was more serviceable ; insomuch that at last she became all new, which caused a great dispute among the philosophers of those times, whether she were the same ship as before, or not. Thus it is, that for our parts we have daily and hourly served under the commands of sin and Satan ; made provision for the flesh to fulfil the lusts thereof ; the most of us have drawn iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with cartropes, and daily like Ephraim increased in wickedness, insomuch that there are not only some bruises and brushes, but as it were a shipwreck of faith and all goodness in the frame of our precious souls. What then remains, but that we should die daily unto sin, and live unto righteousness, put in a new plank this day, and another to-morrow ; now subdue one lust, and another to-morrow ; this day conquer one

temptation, and the next another? Be still on the mending hand, and then the question need not be put, whether we be the same or not: for old things being put away, all things will become new: we shall be new men, new creatures, we shall have new hearts, new spirits, and new songs in our mouths, be made partakers of the new covenant, and at last inheritors of the new Jerusalem.—SPENCER.

There stood forth a magnificent yew-tree in a church-yard. Mid-winter had stripped every branch besides. Oaks and elms stood bare with spreading arms sturdily resisting the gale, and the tall naked poplar waved wildly before its breath. It was then that the fine outline of the ancient yew-tree appeared in fuller and bolder relief against the sky. It stood a green and flourishing thing, where all else was but wreck and deformity. How could you look upon this noble spread of unwithering branches from a poor decayed and broken trunk that seemed only fit for fire-wood, without seeing in it the work of God bringing life from the dead? It typified the garden of the new creation rising from the wreck and ruin of the soul that has been struck with the death of sin. "Son of man, can these bones live?" Both are alike the miracles of creation.

Men can admire a statue; it is breathing with life, and the fire of genius has succeeded in imparting almost animation to the figure. You remember that once it was but an unmeaning block of marble, but the sculptor's imagination has succeeded in portraying a man, and the human face divine meets your enraptured eyes. You are filled with rapture and astonishment at the power of genius to call forth such a beautiful creation of art. And have you no eyes to see, nor heart to appreciate, the noble work of God in the new creation of a soul that was dead in trespasses and sins? That man was once a blank in the creation of God; he was spiritually dead, but now he has a soul instinct with the breath of Heaven, which lives for its Maker, which hears and obeys his voice, and beats high with the generous sentiments of redeeming love. It is a soul that is restored to its original place in the creation, fulfilling the high purposes of its God, and glowing with ardour to live for his honour and

glory. It has not, like the statue, the mock appearance of life; it is not a beautiful illusion of your fancy, which vanishes at one effort of your sober reason. It has not its useless and inanimate form to reign, and hold its empire only in your imagination. No! look on it, it is the living work of God; it has his own resemblance imparted to it; it is immortal, and destined to run an endless race of glory, to the everlasting praise of the infinite Jehovah—behold it—angels are enamoured with it, and yet you, who can break forth in rapture at that lifeless statue, can see no beauty here; no loveliness to draw forth your love; no admiration of this soul “born of God!”

Nature.

The natural man is a spiritual monster. His heart is where his feet should be, fixed upon the earth; his heels are lifted up against heaven, which his heart should be set on. His face is towards the kingdom of Satan, his back towards the kingdom of God. He loves what he should hate, and hates what he should love; joys in what he ought to mourn for, and mourns for what he ought to rejoice in; glories in his shame, and is ashamed of his glory; abhors what he should desire, and desires what he should abhor.

It is with the more noble principle in man, the immaterial spirit, that an intercourse with God is maintained; and had not this immaterial part of man yielded subjection to the hostile enemy, that which is highest in dignity would have been imperative in authority, and have kept both soul and body in due subordination; but man in his fallen condition is like a republican state, where the lowest of the people bear rule; so that the intellectual and spiritual faculty, instead of carrying the majestic sceptre, may be likened to a captured monarch enslaved by his hostile subjects. And it is against this disorganized state of things that the Apostle prays, 1 Thess. v. 23.

If a ship, launched, rigged, and with her sails spread, can-

not stir until the wind come fair, much less can the timber that lies in the carpenter's yard hew, and frame itself into a ship. If a living tree cannot grow but by a communication of sap from the root, much less can a dead stake in the hedge, which has no root, nor vegetating principle, live of its own accord. In a word, if a Christian who hath the spiritual life of grace in him from God cannot even exercise that life without the continual influx of strength from above ; then, surely, one void of this new life, and dead in trespasses and sins, can never be able to beget grace in himself, or concur in the production of it.

By nature, we are all weavers and spinners. We shut our eyes against the garment ready wrought ; and like silkworms, we shall die and perish in our web, if the spirit of God does not unravel it for us, and lead us to the righteousness of Christ.

It is said of Antonius, archbishop of Florence, that after he had heard the confession of a wretched murderer, he gave no other absolution than this : " God be merciful to thee if he please ; and forgive thee thy sins, which I do not believe ; and bring thee to eternal life, which is impossible if God doth not wonderfully work a strange conversion in thy heart." And such, and so sad is the condition of every unregenerate man, every impenitent sinner ; they are no other than bond-slaves of Satan, firebrands and vessels of wrath, men " without God in the world," while they are in the condition of nature. No wonder, then, that as long as they continue in such a wretched estate, God cease to be merciful unto them, deny them forgiveness of sins here in this life, and admission into his kingdom of glory hereafter.—SPENCER.

There is a fable, how that Inconstancy would needs have her picture drawn, but none would undertake it because her face and shape altered so often ; but at length Time took a pencil in hand, and because he had no other table to do it upon, he printed her picture upon man. And most true it is, that all men and women since that time have had too much of her resemblance, and too many men have her very face to the life ; they will be religious, and they will not be religious ; there's nobody knows what they will be, nor

what to make of them ; they are constant in nothing but inconstancy ; they have their gales of devotion, their breathings of love one while ; at another time, when the fit is upon them, there is nothing but dulness of affection ; now, faithful to their promise ; anon, fallen off for one by respect or other.—IBID.

A chain that is made up of coarse gold may be made to outvalue that which is made up of finer ; not in respect of the nature and perfection of the gold, but because there is a very rich jewel fixed unto it. So the angelical nature may, in respect of its pure and undefiled quality, be said to excel that which is human ; yet the human in another way excels it, because there is that sparkling diamond of the Divine nature fastened unto it—The Word made flesh, the Son of God made like unto the son of man in all things, (sin only excepted,) passing by the angels, taking the seed of Abraham. Heb. ii. 16.—IBID.

Orpheus, in the Poet, had no sooner tuned his instrument, but all the birds and beasts assembled ; and forgetting their several appetites, though some were of prey, some of game, some of quarrel, yet they stood altogether in a sociable manner listening unto the sweetness of the music, the sound whereof was no sooner ceased, or drowned by some louder noise, but every beast returned to his nature, ready to devour, and be devoured one of the other. Such is the nature and condition of man, lawless and ill-advised, full of savage and unreclaimable desires of profit, lust, power, and revenge ; yet as long as he gives ear to precepts, laws and religion, sweetly touched with eloquence and divine persuasions, so long is nature restrained and peace maintained ; but if these instruments be silent, or that dislike of the truth, and the wholesome restraints of religion make them not audible, then all things dissolve into anarchy and mere confusion.—IBID.

As it is with the fighting of two fencers on the stage, you would think at first they were in earnest ; but observing how wary they are where they hit one another, you may soon know they do not intend to kill one another ; and that

which puts all out of doubt, when the prize is done, you shall see them merry together, sharing what they have got from their deluded spectators, which was all they sought for. Thus you shall have a carnal heart, a man in the state of unregeneracy, make a great bustle against sin, by complaining of it, or praying against it, so that there seems to be a great scuffle betwixt Satan and such a soul ; but if you follow him off the stage of duty, you shall see the devil and him sit as friendly in a corner as ever.—IBID.

As among the weeds of unmanured earth some are painted with alluring colours, but they are only weeds still ; so among the fruits of unsanctified minds one may carry a more specious appearance than others ; but they are all, spiritually considered, no other still than sins and vices, the growth of “ the carnal mind, which is enmity against God.”

A mountain stream, whose pure and salubrious waters are continually polluted by the daily washing and cleansing of poisonous minerals, is a just emblem of the flesh, whose desires, imaginations, and affections, were once pure and healthy, but is now like a troubled and corrupted spring which is always sending out bad water. Just as the good nature of an angel is always bringing forth good motions and desires, so the evil nature of fallen creatures is as plentiful the contrary way, ceaselessly bursting out into bad and pernicious motions and lusts.

There is a moral truth and uprightness, which we may call a field-flower, because it may be found growing in the wild and waste of nature.

The various calls of God by his grace, gospel, and providence, these, perhaps, cross the life of man as the breeze crosseth the ocean ; which, uncongenial in its nature, cannot coalesce with it, which may sweep and desolate, may agitate the surface, but can make there no permanent impression, can exercise no alterative and transforming power upon its nature. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Obedience.

If conscience be enlightened, and faithful in the trial, a man cannot deliberately deceive himself: he must know whether his resolutions and endeavours be to obey all the will of God ; or, whether, like an intermitting pulse, that sometimes beats regularly, and then falters, he is zealous in some duties, and cold, or careless in others? Saul would offer sacrifice, but not obey the divine command to destroy all the Amalekites: for his partiality and hypocrisy he was rejected of God. But 'tis the character of David, he was a man after God's own heart, in that he did all his will. 'Tis not the authority of the lawgiver, but other motives that sway those who observe some commands, and are regardless of others. A servant that readily goes to a fair or a feast when sent by his master, and neglects other duties, does not his master's command from obedience, but his own choice. Sincere obedience is to the royalty of the divine law, and is commensurate to its purity and extent.

To go to duty, not because God puts forth his hand to lead me, but because he holds forth his precept to command me, is pure obedience. As when a general commands his army to march, if then the soldiers should stand upon terms, and refuse to go, except they have better clothes, their pay in hand, or the like, and then they will march ; this would not show them an obedient, disciplined army: but if, at the reading of their orders, they presently break up their quarters, and set forth, though it be midnight when the command come, and they without money, clothes on their backs, leaving the whole care of themselves for these things to their general, and they only attend how they may best fulfil his commands, these may be said to march in obedience. Thus, when a believer, after a faithful use of means finds his heart dead and dull, yet in obedience to the command, though the sense of his inability is so great that he questions whether he shall have power to fulfil God's

will, yet resolutely sets himself to the work, this is an obedient soul, and may hope to meet God in his way with that which he cannot carry with him : as the lepers, who, when they went, in obedience to Christ's command, *to show themselves to the priest*, were cured by the way, though they saw nothing of it when they set forth.

How doth it affect and take the father when he bids his little child go and bring him such a thing, (that may be as much as he can well lift,) to see him not stand, and turn from the command as hard, but run to it, and put forth his whole strength about it ; though at last, maybe, he cannot do it, yet the willingness of the child pleases him so, that his weakness rather stirs up the father to pity and help him, than provokes him to chide him. Christ throws this covering over his disciples' infirmities,—“the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.” O ! this obedience, that, like the dropping honey, comes without squeezing, though but little of it, tastes sweetly with God ; and such is sincere obedience.

Though weakened through the flesh, God may justly command his fallen creatures to keep his commandments diligently. If we have lost our power, there is no reason God should lose his right. If your servants should fall into habits of drunkenness, would you admit this for a plea for neglecting your business, or coming short in it ? At such times he is unable to do his master's work, but he is bound to it. It is altogether unreasonable that another should suffer through my default.

Perfection.

Have you seen the tulip-bed in the garden of the florist ? have you marked the gorgeous colours, the rich variety, the delicate pencilling ? All these gay flowers were once of one dark dingy hue. Year after year did the gardener watch them, tend them, transplant them from soil to soil, till at

length, one by one, some sooner and some later, they broke into these glorious hues, this boundless variety of stripe and freckle. Then did he remove them to his choicest border, and shelter them from sun and shower; and now thou gazest on them in their beauty. Thus dark and unlovely once were the redeemed of the Lord; such pains and watching did he bestow upon them; year after year did he look for the lovely graces of the Spirit in them, till one, and another, not all at once, like the tulip, but by degrees, oftentime slow and painful, shone forth in the beauty of holiness. And thus hath he transplanted them to his heavenly courts, where, never scorched by the sun, nor smitten by the shower, nor torn by the winds, they shall bloom for ever and ever. Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God. Ps. xcii. 13.

Meteors, soon after their first appearing, make the greatest show. A fire of thorns, as soon as it is kindled, gives the fairest blaze, and makes the most noise and crackling, and both of them decrease by little and little, till they disappear; whereas the morning light shineth more and more unto the perfect day. Mushrooms come to their perfection in one night's growth, but trees of righteousness of God's right planting are still in growth, and bring forth most fruit in old age. Ps. xcii. 14. Summer fruits are soon ripe, and soon rotten; and winter fruits last longer. Infants in the womb that make more haste than good speed prove abortive; whereas those that stay their time, come to their growth by degrees. And thus it is, that we must think to aspire unto perfection, but in a gradual way; not imagine that we can the first day, and in the beginning of our first conversion, attain unto it; for as no man is made the worst at first, no man is made the best all at once; which made a good old Christian cry out, I would not upon the sudden attain to my highest pitch, but grow towards it by little and little.—SPENCER.

The whole fabric of the universe, the courses and ordinations both of providence and grace, compose only one undeviating system of means, and are by no means a final cause

or end, either in whole or in part. In proof of this we may observe, there is no rest or resting place in the visible or elementary creation ; all things fluctuate, and move onwards, either to produce or to establish something beyond themselves, and these in their turn act over the same or similar operations for others. The earth is ever undergoing rest, and continual changes, whether on its surface or its component materials : the ocean enlarges in one place its boundaries, in another it is narrowed and contracted : in the vast kingdom of nature, whether in minerals, plants, or earthy substances, one production seems only designed to prepare the way for another, and continued succession. Consequently, nothing here has attained its own proper end, but is restlessly urged to a *plus ultra*. So the apostle : "The whole creation travaileth," &c. And thus it is in the kingdom of grace. Grace itself, with all its operations and objects, here passes through the world as through a strange country, and passes on for consummation and rest to a futurity of glory.

There is a *relative* perfection of holiness, according to the several conditions of the saints in this life. As in a garden there are trees that produce different fruits, and of different degrees of goodness ; the vine, the fig-tree, the apple-tree ; if an apple-tree produce the best fruits of its kind, though not equal to the fruit of the vine, 'tis perfectly good. Thus, in the world there are several conditions of life among men : some are in places of dignity and superiority ; others of subjection and service. A servant that is faithful and diligent, *adorns the gospel*, and excels in that relation, and is equally accepted of God, as others in a higher order. He that gained two talents was esteemed as faithful as he that gained five, because the profit resulting from the improvement was in proportion to the stock entrusted with him.

There is a perfection relative to the various spiritual states of Christians here. St. John addresses his counsel to Christians under several titles, to *children*, to *young men*, and *fathers*, with respect to their different ages in Christianity. A child is perfect in the quality of a child, when he has the stature, the strength, the understanding that is becoming

his age, though he is distant from that complete state to which he will arrive in his mature age. A young man has the perfection proper to his age. A new convert that has such degrees of knowledge and holiness as are suitable to the means, and his time of advancement by them, is esteemed complete in that state of grace. Some are entered into the school of heaven, and are in the first lessons of Christianity; others have made a higher progress in it, *to the fulness of the stature.*

It is the nature of all the works of God's creation to seek, and to go on to, their perfection. The first dawn of morn continues to increase until it shines in the noontide radiance. The feeble plant which is just breaking the clod, continues to grow until in the course of years it stands a flourishing and a stately tree. In the animal kingdom we see God's creatures gradually emerging from the weakness and insignificance of infancy, and rising, where no obstructions exist, into the vigour and maturity of age. And shall the light go on to perfection, the plant and the flower to blossom, the tree to bring forth its fruit; and all God's creatures grow up and flourish each its own perfection—and grace—the immortal plant of grace—"the incorruptible seed," which is to "live and abide for ever,"—this little tree of the Lord's own planting—shall this alone be denied the benefits of God's universal law,—let all things grow until the harvest? No! grace has its destined perfection. True grace is a seed which, though sown in a lowly soil, will soon manifest its heavenly origin. It will infallibly spring forth, and be ever aspiring to ascend upwards, until it climbs the skies, and, there transplanted, shall bloom in the courts of the Lord for ever.

There is something very fine in the thought, which lifts up man from his native nothingness and insignificance—of that advancement in holiness which he is destined to attain. We may conceive the Creator well pleased in seeing himself surrounded by his intelligent creatures, whom he has redeemed out of the hand of sin and Satan, growing up in the likeness of their Maker. Like two mathematical lines, (the curve and its asymptote,) which have the well-known

but remarkable property of always approaching one another, yet never coming into contact : so the soul is destined to draw nigher and nigher to God, in the likeness and image it bears to him, yet never to reach his excellencies. There is something exceedingly ennobling in the thought of the soul's march from glory to glory in the ages of eternity, unceasingly going forwards, and aspiring in her upward flight after God, to reach him, to be wholly like him ; yet by an eternal law which binds the creature, though still shining brighter and brighter, and putting on more of his likeness, yet never reaching to the attainment of his perfections.

Perseverance.

The promises stand as the mountains about Jerusalem, never to be removed : the weak as well as the strong Christian is within the line of communication. Were saints to fight it out in open field by the strength of their new grace, then the strong were more likely to stand, and the weak to fall in battle ; but both castled in the covenant are alike safe.

The Duke of Alva having given some prisoners their lives, they afterwards petitioned him for some food. His answer was, that "he would grant them life, but no meat." And they were famished to death. The deniers of final perseverance represent the Deity in a similar view. "God promises eternal life to the saints if they endure to the end ;" but he will not secure to them the continuance of that grace without which eternal life cannot be had !

"Blessed for ever and ever," says Hooker, "be that mother's child whose faith hath made him the child of God. The earth may shake, the pillars thereof may tremble under us, the countenance of the heavens may be appalled, the sun may lose his light, the moon her beauty, the stars their glory ; but concerning the man that trusted in God, if the fire have proclaimed itself unable as much as

to singe a hair of his head ; if lions, beasts ravenous by nature and keen by hunger, being set to devour, have, as it were, religiously adored the very flesh of a faithful man ; what is there in the world that shall change his heart, overthrow his faith, alter his affections towards God, or the affection of God to him ? If I be of this note, who shall separate between me and my God ? Therefore, the assurance of my hope I will labour to keep as a jewel unto the end ; and by labour, through the gracious mediation of his prayer, I shall keep it."

There are some who tell us that "a man may persevere until he comes to die, and yet perish in almost the very article of death : " and they illustrate this doctrine by the simile of "a ship's foundering in the harbour's mouth." It is very true that some wooden vessels have so perished. But it is no less true, that all God's chosen vessels are infallibly safe from so perishing. For, through his goodness, every one of them is insured by him whom the winds and seas, both literal and metaphorical, obey. And their insurance runs thus : "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee : and when through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." "The ransomed of the Lord shall return and come to Zion, with songs, and everlasting joy upon their heads : " so far from foundering within sight of land.

There are no marks of shipwrecks, no remnants of lost vessels, floating upon that sea which flows between God's Jerusalem below, and the Jerusalem which is above. If a man were cast into a river, we should look upon him as safe, while he was able to keep his head above water. The church, Christ's mystic body, is cast into the sea of the world, (and afterwards into the sea of death) ; and Christ their head keeps himself aloft, even in heaven. Is there, then, any fear or possibility of drowning a member of this body ? If any should be drowned, then either Christ himself must be drowned first, or else that member may be dissevered from Christ : both which are impossible. By virtue, therefore, of this union, we see that on Christ's safety ours depends. If he is safe, so are we. If we perish, so must he.

Even an earthly parent is particularly careful and tender of a dying child ; and surely, when God's children are in that situation, he will (speaking after the manner of men) be doubly gracious to his helpless offspring, who are his by election, by adoption, by covenant, by redemption, by regeneration, and by a thousand other indissoluble ties.

Don't tell me of your feelings. A traveller would be glad of fine weather ; but if he be a man of business, he will go on. Bunyan says you must not judge of a man's haste by his horse ; for when the horse can hardly move, you may see by the rider's urging him what a hurry he is in.

The Lord's blessing of an adopted people is an irreversible thing, because he is God and not man, and therefore cannot repent, nor call in the promise which he hath made ; for which purpose " he doth not behold iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel." If the sun should be always immovably fixed in one place, as it was a little while in Joshua's time, at the destruction of the kings,—though I might shut out the light of the sun from me, yet, as soon as I remove the curtain, the sun is still where it was, ready to be found, and to shine upon me. The case were lamentable with us, if, so often as man provokes God's justice, he should presently revoke his mercy ; if the issue of our salvation should depend upon the frailty and mutability of our own nature, and our life should be in our own keeping. If the pure angels of heaven fell from their created condition, to be most black and hideous adversaries of the God that made them ; if Adam stood not firm with all that stock of strength and integrity of will which he had in paradise ; how can I, who have so many lusts within, so many enemies without, such armies of fears and temptations round about me, be able to resist and stand ? Grace inherent is as mutable in me as it was in Adam ; Satan, as malicious and impetuous against me as against Adam ; propensions to sin, and falling away, strong in me, which were none in Adam ; snares as many, weaknesses more ; enemies as many, temptations more. From the grace which is deposited in mine own keeping, I cannot but depart daily, if the Lord should leave me in the hand of mine own counsel : even as water, though

it could be made as hot as fire ; yet, being left unto itself, will quickly reduce and work itself to its own original coldness again. We have grace abiding in our hearts, as we have light in our houses, always by emanation, effusion, and supportance from the Sun of Righteousness which shines upon us. Therefore this is all the comfort which a man hath remaining, that though I am wanting to myself, and do often turn from God, yet he is not wanting to me, nor returns from me ; for “the gifts and calling of God are without repentance.” The heart of the best man is like the wheels in Ezekiel’s vision ; as mutable and moveable several ways as wheels ; as perplexed, hindered, and distracted in itself, as cross wheels in one another ; grace swaying one way, and flesh another ;—who can expect stability in such a thing ? Surely, of itself it hath none : but the constancy and uniformity of motion in the wheels was this, that they were joined to the living creatures who, in their motion, returned not when they went. Such is the stability of the faithful in the covenant ; they have it not from themselves, for they are all like wheels, but from him unto whom by the same Spirit of life they are united ; who cannot repent, nor return from the covenant of mercy which he hath made.

A believer has eternal life in actual possession in the seed, and in reversion in the harvest, John vi. 54. If the believer is one that is born again not of corruptible seed, but incorruptible, 1 Pet. i. 23, by what process is this life to be extinguished ? The life of the plant depends upon the life of the seed, but this seed (the seed of grace) is incorruptible, therefore the plant produced by it is incorruptible.

The candidate for immortality—the believer who contends for an incorruptible crown, must not calculate on a successful progress without exertion, and fresh and vigorous efforts of toil and labour. He must not turn out of the path because impediments lie in it, nor leave the “narrow way,” however strait and difficult he may find it at times, to walk in the easier path to flesh and blood, of self-indulgence and carnal ease, but go straight forwards, nor turn to the right hand nor to the left, “looking unto the recompense of the reward.” The traveller will keep in the road which leads to the city

he wishes to reach, and will not leave it because of the occasional ruggedness of it. It may be allowed him who walks only for the pleasure of the moment, to turn away from the path in which he has not the flowers of verdure ever beneath his feet, and beauty wherever he looks around. But what should we have thought of the competitor of the Olympic games, (to which St. Paul alludes,) whose object was the glory of a prize, the corruptible crown—with the illustrious reward before him—with strength and agility that might assure him the possession of it, and with all the assembled multitudes of Greece to witness his triumph,—if he had turned away from the contest for the victory, because he was not to tread on roses, and to be refreshed with fragrance as he goes along! And what shall we think of him who has a nobler reward—an incorruptible crown—with grace and strength proportioned to his wants and necessities, and “compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses,” the heavenly host—if he shall cease “to run with patience the race that is set before him!”

Persecution.

We have one well-attested instance of the Lord's faithfulness, in the case of Mr. Bainham, who suffered in the reign of Queen Mary. When in the fire, he thus addressed his persecutors: “You call for miracles in proof of our doctrine; now behold one. I feel no more pain from these flames than if I was laid upon a bed of roses.”

Some harbours are fenced with massy chains of iron, reaching from side to side to obstruct the access of shipping. Similar is the profession of Christ and his cause in persecuting times. But as a ship has often been able to force its way into the port, and burst the chains that oppose its entrance, by the aid of a favourable tide and a strong breeze; so persecution is nothing to a believing soul, whose sails are filled with the breathings of the Holy Ghost, and the full tide of whose affections is turned by grace to God, and Christ, and heaven.

To expose ourselves to worldly contempt and persecution for Christ's sake, is like going into the cold bath. At first it gives us a shock, but it grows easier and easier every time, until by degrees it ceases to be disagreeable.

Some fresh-water sailor standing upon the shore in a fair day, and beholding the ships top and gallant in all their bravery riding safely at anchor, thinks it a brave thing to go to sea, and will by all means go abroad; but being out a league or two from the harbour, and feeling himself by the rocking of the ship to grow ill, and his soul even to abhor all manner of meat, or otherwise a storm to arrive, the wind and the sea, as it were, conspiring the sinking of the vessel, forthwith repents his folly, and makes vows that if he come to be set ashore again, he will bid an eternal farewell to all such voyages. Thus there are many faint-hearted Christians to be found amongst us, who in calm days of peace, when religion is not overclouded by the times, will needs join themselves to the number of the people of God; they will be as earnest and as forward as the best, and who but they? Yet let but a tempest begin to appear, and the sea grow rougher than at the first entry, the times alter, troubles raised, many cross winds of opposition and gainsaying begin to blow, they are weary of their course, and will to shore again, resolving never to thrust themselves into any more adventures. Christ they would have by all means, but Christ crucified by no means.

Peace.

As the eye, too small, and unequal to the light of the sun spread far and wide, cannot with one look behold and comprehend all its beauties diffused through the whole compass of nature; so the peace of God doth not only surpass all our senses, but our understanding also.

Venus' orbit, or path of rotation, is for the most part extremely regular; hardly any point of it being more remote from the sun than another. Hence this planet is remark-

able for always preserving nearly an equal distance from that luminary. Similar is the experience of some believers. They enjoy rather an even and settled peace, than any exuberant overflowing of consolation. Their habitation is, mostly, on the middle region of Mount Tabor; instead of being now elevated to the summit, and anon turned down into the valley below. The manner is not always exactly the same in which the Holy Spirit trains his disciples to a meetness for their heavenly inheritance. Like a judicious and careful tutor, he wisely and condescendingly adapts his modes of instruction to the genius, and to the particular improvement of each individual pupil; until, having taken their degree in grace, they ascend, one by one, to their glorious home above.

In vain do you seek to stop the streams while the fountains are open; turn yourselves whither you will, bring yourselves into what condition you can, nothing but reconciliation with the God of judgment can give you rest and peace in the day of visitation. What variety of plagues are in his hand! changing of condition will do no more to the avoiding of them, than a sick man's turning himself from one side to another; during his turning, he forgets his pain by striving to move; being laid down again, he finds his condition the same as before.

By the laws of England noblemen have this privilege, that none of them can be bound to the peace, because it is supposed that a noble disposition will never be engaged in brawls and contentions. It is supposed, that the peace is bound to them, and that of their own accord they will be always careful to preserve it. It is the base bramble that rends and tears what is next unto it. Gentleness, mercy, goodness, love, tenderness of others' sufferings, are the greatest ornament of a noble spirit; and where it is sanctified, the grace of God shines bright in such a heart.—
SPENCER.

There are a sort of foolish country people, that think nature will work out all distempers, and they need no physic. Some of them are confuted by their graves; others of more strength and healthier constitutions possibly recover

their former vigour; but their diseases make a truce only, not a peace with their bodies; the latent cause remains and watcheth its advantage of the next heat or cold the body takes, or the next intemperate season that comes. And thus many deal with their souls, never regarding when their spirits are troubled to heal up the wound with the balm of Gilead, but go on in this worldly natural way, and at last their troubled spirits are quiet again, so they get their peace of course: but all this while the hidden cause of their trouble watcheth the next advantage, their souls fester within, and on a sudden they are ready to despair, and lay violent hands on themselves.

The same effects, or what appear to be the same, may arise from very different causes. Jonah slept in the storm, so did our blessed Lord. The one slept in evil security, the other in the peace of God which passeth all understanding. The two states are perfectly distinct; the one is the momentary calm of the man of the world, the other the peace of the Christian.

Peace and joy are only to be maintained by stedfast "looking to Jesus." When the mariner is overtaken by the perilous tempest, what imparts to his mind confidence and tranquillity? Does he look forth at the fury of the raging storm; and in order to enjoy peace and a sense of security, set himself to examine the state of his own feelings upon it? No! he examines the tightness of his vessel; the firmness of its timber; the completeness of the tackling and its seaworthy state; he calls to mind the storms it has already weathered, and the fearful seas it has been brought through in safety. And how does the landsman quiet his fears when he feels his dwelling tremble before the beating blast? To listen to the roaring of the winds, and brood over his own feelings, would only sink his spirit the more. He thinks of the good bottom on which his house is founded, and looks at the thickness, strength, and tried stability of its walls. So must we derive our peace in surveying the sufficiency of the foundation on which our hopes are built, not shifting sand, but solid rock, of the foundation of which Jehovah himself hath said, "Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation," &c.

There is a difference between peace with God, and peace of conscience. The one we have merely by grace and free justification, but in the court of conscience there must be some evidence and manifestation. A bankrupt has peace in court as soon as the surety has paid his debt; but he only hath the comfort of it within himself when it is signified to him by letter or otherwise; so while free justification is the *ground* of our comfort, works done in Christ are the *evidence* that intimate it to us.

Christ saith of himself, "I came not to send peace, but a sword;" and yet the apostle saith, that "he came and preached peace to them which were afar off, and to those which were near." How shall these things be reconciled? Surely as a man may say of a rock: "Nothing more quiet, because it is never stirred, and yet nothing more unquiet, because it is ever assaulted;" so we may say of the church, "Nothing more peaceable, because it is established upon a rock; and yet nothing more unpeaceable, because that rock is in the midst of seas, wind, enemies, persecutions." But yet still the prophet's conclusion is certain. "The work of righteousness is peace; and the effect of righteousness, quietness and assurance for ever."

The ancients, in their mythological learning, tell us, that when Jupiter espied the men of the world striving for Truth, and pulling her in pieces to secure her to themselves, he sent Mercury down amongst them, and he with his usual arts dressed Error up in the imagery of Truth, and thrust her into the crowd, and so left them to contend still: and though then by contention men were sure to get but little truth, yet they were as earnest as ever, and lost peace too in their importunate contentions for the very image of truth. And this indeed is no wonder; but where truth and peace are brought into the world together, and bound up in the same bundle of life, when we are taught a religion by the Prince of peace, who is the truth itself, to see men contending for this truth to the breach of that peace, and when men fall out to see that they should make Christianity their theme, that is one of the greatest wonders in the world.—
SPENCER.

Praise.

The word which is rendered praise, primarily imports irradiation of a luminous body. The high ambition of a penitent soul is that of becoming a reflector, from which the glories of the Sun of Righteousness may be more widely diffused on the world of men and angels.

Why are we not more grateful for so many benefits which we have no ways deserved? How grateful would a lost and tormented soul be, if God should free him from those flames wherein he is tormented, and place him in the same condition we now are! What a life would he lead, and how grateful would he be unto so merciful a benefactor! He hath done no less for us, but much more; for if he hath not drawn us out of Tophet, he hath not thrown us into it, as we deserved: which is the greater favour? Tell me, if a creditor should cast that debtor into prison who owed him a thousand ducats, and after the enduring of much affliction, at last release him; or should suffer another who owed fifty thousand ducats to go up and down free, without touching a thread of his garment; whether of the debtors received the greatest benefit? I believe thou wilt say, "the latter." More, then, are we indebted to God Almighty; and therefore ought to praise him by living entirely for his service. Consider how a man would live who should be restored to life, after he had been in Tophet. Thou shouldest live better, since thou art more indebted to Almighty God, and thus praise him.

Those who are parents may have observed that when a child has something it values very highly, or that possesses a great and obviously intrinsic worth, the child will run to the parents to entreat that the treasure may be kept till the owner is capable of making a fitting use of it. Let us acknowledge ourselves to be but children in Christianity as it regards praise. Praise is the language which the people of the Lord shall hear when entering the kingdom he hath prepared for them. "Well done, &c." But now we must be afraid of it, nor dare to receive it. Let us carry it to him

who will keep it for us till the day comes when, through Christ's merits, we shall be accounted worthy of it. For the sinful creature to take praise to itself is to defraud the living God.—E. J. CAULFIELD.

A man may praise God for the redemption of the world, &c., who has no consciousness of having secured an interest in it, but not like him who feels he has a property in it. How different will be their feelings! Just as great will be the difference of interest which will be felt by a stranger passing through a beautiful estate, and by the owner of it. One may admire the richness of the soil, the beauty of its crops, and the stateliness of its trees; but his interest in it will fall very far short of his who has the title and property in it.

To praise God is a most profitable duty. Ps. lxxvii. 5, 6. The more exhalations are drawn from the earth, the more vapours ascend, the more showers come down. In like manner the more our praises ascend to God, the more mercies come down. There is a reciprocal intercourse between us and God by mercies, as there is between the earth and the lower heavens by vapours and showers.

We are in God's hand, as clay in the hands of the potter. Did you ever know a potter thank a vessel of his own making for its beauty or usefulness? Surely the praise is due, not to the pot, but to the potter. In a still infinite higher degree is the whole praise due to God, for the graces and the good works which he has given us.

Rivers receiving their fulness from the ocean, pay their tribute by returning their streams unto it back again; which homage, if they should deny to yield, their swelling waters would bear down their own banks and drown the country. So we receiving from the infinite ocean of all goodness whatsoever fulness we have of grace and virtue, the praises and glory due unto them are, by humble acknowledgments and thanksgiving, to return to him that gave them. But if we shall wax unthankful, and refuse to pay the tribute due, and show our rebellion against our great Lord by encroaching upon his right, thinking to grow rich by robbing of him, and keeping of all to our own use; these gifts

thus retained, make us but to swell with pride, and breaking down the banks of modesty and humility, will not only empty us of all grace and grandeur, but make all our good parts we have hurtful and pernicious. And thus it is, that the not giving unto God that which is God's; the not returning praise to God for grace received, is the ready way to be graceless.—SPENCER.

Profession.

Some professors pass for very meek, good-natured people, until you displease them. They resemble a pool or pond, which, while you let it alone, looks clear and limpid; but, if you put in a stick and stir the bottom, the rising sediment soon discovers the impurity that lurks beneath.

Men may say they are Jews, and are not, but of the synagogue of Satan; and men may say they are Christians, and are not, but of the kingdom of Satan too. A wen in the body seemeth to belong unto the integrity of the whole, when indeed it is an enemy and thief therein. Ivy about a tree seemeth to embrace it with much affection, when indeed it doth but kill and choke it. Men may take upon them the profession of Christians, and, like a wen, be skinned over with the same outside which the true members have; may pretend much submission, worship, and ceremony, and yet (such is the satanic hypocrisy of the heart) the same men may haply inwardly swell, and rankle against the power of his truth and Spirit.—SPENCER.

Look but upon two sawyers working at the pit, the one casts his eyes upward, whilst his main action tends downward; the other stands with a countenance dejected, whilst his work is to draw the saw upward. Thus the pharisee and publican, the real professor and the rotten-hearted hypocrite, the one looketh up towards heaven, whilst his actions tend to the pit infernal; the other casts down his head, whilst his hand and his heart move upwards; the one seems

better than he is, the other is better than he seems ; the one hath nothing but form, whilst the other hath the power of godliness.—IBID.

In the things of the world, how doth every man strive to be suitable to his rank, and is accounted base if he be not so ! If of a yeoman he became a gentleman, of a gentleman a knight, as his person is improved, so will he improve his port also ; yea, the excesses of men show, that many go beyond their rank in their house, in their fare, in their clothes, building like emperors, clothing like kings, feasting like princes. But in our spiritual estate it is nothing so ; for our house, we can be content to dwell in ceiled houses, when the ark of God is under tents ; and who doth endeavour that himself may be a temple fit for the Holy Ghost to dwell in ? As for our clothes, they should be royal, our garments should ever be white, the wedding garments should never be off ; but we are far from this kind of clothing, we do not endeavour to be clothed with the righteousness of the saints. Finally, for our diet, we are called to the table of the Lord, and should be sustained with angels' food, yet content ourselves with swine's meat ; for what else are fleshly lusts ? We are called to be the sons of God, yet our eye is very seldom upon our Father to see what becometh his sons ; we are called to be members of Christ, but little do we care what becometh the mystical body ; we are rather in name than in deed, either children of God, or members of Christ.—IBID.

It is observable that the hedgehog hath two holes in his siege, one towards the south, another towards the north ; now when the southern wind blows, he stops up that hole, and turns him northwards ; and then when the north wind blows, he stops up that hole likewise, and turns him southward again. Such urchins, such hedgehogs, are all time-servers, they do all things for the time, but nothing for the truth ; they believe for a time, as long as the warm sun shines on them ; but as soon as any storm of persecution ariseth, by-and-bye they have a starting hole to hide themselves in ; they turn face about, and change their profession with the time.—IBID.

Professors resemble the tares and wheat. There are tares which mingle with the corn, and cannot well be separated from it without injury to the crop. There is the showy weed, aptly resembling the gay, the carnal professor, but known and distinguished by every eye from the true followers of Christ. There are also weeds less showy, but still more obnoxious, fitly representing the barren professor, "having a name to live," but spiritually dead. Again, there is the true tare, so much like the corn itself, that none but an experienced observer could discern the difference between them; forcibly presenting an image of those whose life and conversation so outwardly resemble the true Christian, that none but the eye of an omniscient Judge can detect their insincerity.

Many a professor, who dwells where the full-orbed splendour of the Sun of Righteousness shines around him, and in a genial climate, yet more resembles a native of Iceland or Lapland. You would suppose that for more than half his time he was not permitted to see the sun. A moral winter appears to rest upon his soul. What is the state of their hearts towards God? Are they not cold and barren as the winter season? What fruits do we see adorning their profession? Or rather it may be asked, are they not like so many bare and leafless branches of the snow-clad forest, through which the gusts of pride and passion sweep with relentless fury, and upon which the dews and showers of gospel grace produce but the cold icicles of vanity, sin, and death? Are there not others whose profession is little better than a mantle of snow, beautiful and dazzling to the eye for a short time, but soon melting and vanishing into its native element.

I saw, says one, a bank covered with violets. The sun was shining full upon it, and its genial warmth had opened the flowers, and caused them to exhibit the most beautiful colours. But when I began to gather them, I found, with the exception of very few, that their colour was all they had to recommend them; they were not the sort of violets which afford the sweet fragrance we expect to find in that flower. It struck me forcibly that this was an emblem of the church,

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the professing church of Christ. How many are there of fair and promising appearance, professing, and seeming to be of the truth, who yet fail to send up a "sweet smelling savour to God"—who are wanting in those holy and devout, and grateful dispositions and affections, which their profession indicates. I bid my heart take the lesson home. What fragrance have I diffused abroad? What incense have I sent upwards? Are not my words and thoughts, is not my whole profession and character, like those scentless violets? There is beauty even in the outward profession of religion and holiness; but if the inward principle be wanting or deficient, there will be no fragrance shed around, no incense wafted upwards. And yet I have been situated, as it were, on a green sunny bank; my opportunities and means of grace have been many.

Prosperity.

A friend of Mr. Dod's being raised from a mean estate to much worldly greatness, Mr. Dod sent him word that "this was but like going out of a boat into a ship; and he should remember that while he was in the world, he was still on the sea."

Too much wealth, like a suit of clothes too heavily embroidered, does but encumber, and weigh us down, instead of answering the solid purposes of usefulness and convenience.

Generally speaking, the sunshine of too much worldly favour weakens and relaxes our spiritual nerves; as weather, too intensely hot, relaxes those of the body. A degree of seasonable opposition, like a fine dry frost, strengthens, and invigorates, and braces up.

A prosperous state is showy to the eye, but very perilous; like a ship that is finely carved and painted, but so leaky, that without continual pumping it cannot be kept above water; so without the strictest guard over their hearts and senses, the prosperous cannot escape the shipwreck of a

good conscience, and fall into many foolish lusts that drown men in perdition. Yet this state of life many aspire to, as the most happy. When Lot separated from Abraham, he chose the pleasant fruitful country that was like the garden of the Lord. Sad choice! The land was the best, but the inhabitants the worst; yet a wealthy state of life varies.—
SPENCER.

I have seen the wicked (saith David) in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay-tree. And why like a green bay-tree? Because in the winter, when all other trees, as the vine-tree, fig-tree, apple-tree, &c., which are more profitable trees, are withered and naked, yet the bay continueth as green in the winter as the summer: so fareth it with wicked men, when the children of God, in the storm of persecutions and afflictions and miseries, seem withered, and as it were dead, yet the wicked all that time flourish, and do appear green in the eyes of the world. They wallow in worldly wealth, but it is for their destruction; they wax fat, but it is for the day of slaughter; they are cursed with barrenness. It was the case of Hophni and Phineas; the Lord gave them enough, and suffered them to go on, and prosper in their wickedness; but what was the reason? Because he would destroy them.—IBID.

Prosperity with humility is good: and prosperous vessels whose sails are filled, if well ballasted, run a more steady course; so it is with saints when they press forwards with full sails and joy of faith: for while the holy ballast of humility is in the hold of the heart, and not merely aloft in skies above deck, appearing to men, they are not soon lifted up with every good success they meet with, but carry it evenly before the Lord.

¶Promises.

If a merchant of indisputable opulence, and honesty gives me his note of hand, binding himself to pay so much money, I have no reason to fear a failure of payment. “Mr. —

is a person of vast wealth, and of as great integrity : my money is as sure as if I had it in my pocket." Thus we reason concerning human things. Give the same implicit credit to God's promises. We have it in his own writing, under his own hand and seal, that "every one who believeth shall have everlasting life;" and "whoso cometh unto me, I will in nowise cast out." Do not dishonour God's note of hand, by letting unbelief question either his ability or his veracity. Do not withhold from the God of heaven and earth that confidence which, in many cases, you cannot withhold from a man.

When men come to close with the promise indeed, to make a life upon it, they are very ready to question, and inquire whether it be possible that ever the word of it should be made good to them. He that sees a little boat swimming at sea, observes no great difficulty in it; looks upon it without any solicitude of mind at all; beholds how it tosses up and down without any fears of its sinking; but let the man commit his own life to sea in that bottom, what inquiries will he make! What a search into the vessel! "Is it possible," saith he, "this little thing should safeguard my life in the ocean?" It is so with us in our views of the promises. Whilst we consider them at large, as they are in the word, they are all true, all "yea and amen," and shall be accomplished. But when we go to venture our soul on a promise in an ocean of wrath and temptations, then every blast we think will overturn it. It will not bear us above all the waves. Now here we are apt to deceive ourselves, and mistake the whole thing in question, which is at the bottom of many corrupted reasonings. We inquire whether it be so to us as the word holds out; when the truth is, the question is not about the nature of the thing, but about the power of God. Place the doubt right, and it is this—Is God able to accomplish what he hath spoken? Can he heal my backslidings? Can he pardon my sins? Can he save my soul?

It is true, many difficulties fall out between the word, and the thing. So was it with Abraham in the business of a son: and so with David in the matter of a kingdom. God

will have his promised mercies to fall as the dews upon the parched, gasping earth ; or, “ as the shadow of a great rock in a weary land,” Isaiah xxxii. 2 ; very welcome unto the traveller, who hath had the sun beat upon his head in his travel all the day. “ Zion is a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, as a royal diadem in the hand of her God ;” Isa. lxii. 3. The precious stones of a diadem must be cut and polished, before they be set in beauty and glory. God will have oftentimes the precious living stones of Zion to have many a sharp cutting, before they come to be fully fixed in his diadem ; but yet in the close, whatever obstacles stand in the way, the promise hath still wrought out its passage : as a river, all the while it is stopped with a dam, is still working higher and higher, still getting more and more strength, until it beat down all before it, and obtain a free course to its appointed place. Every time opposition lies against the fulfilling of the promise, and so seems to impede it for a season, it gets more and more power, until the appointed hour be come, and then the promise bears down all before it.

Beggars used to be quicksighted. Benhadad’s servant saw light at a little hole ; and gathered from a few kind words which dropped from Ahab’s mouth, that there was mercy laid up in his heart towards their master, which they soon blew up. Joab saw David’s bowels working towards Absalom through the casement of his countenance, and therefore let down the widow’s parable as a bucket to draw out that mercy which lay in his heart, like water in a deep well. How much more encouragement hast thou, Christian, to plead with thy God, who art not put to guess at God’s thoughts, but hast the assurance of plain promises for thy good speed ! And do we yet read them, as once that eunuch that sweet promise, Isaiah liii., and understand not the meaning of them ? Do we yet sit so near our comfort, as Hagar by the well, and our eyes held not to see it ? Can we yet walk over the promises as barren ground, when, with a little digging into them, we might find a treasure to pay all our debts, and supply all our wants ?

Every promise is built upon four pillars. God’s justice

or holiness, which will not suffer him to deceive ; his grace or goodness, which will not suffer him to forget ; his truth, which will not suffer him to change ; his power, which makes him able to accomplish.

When I first amused myself with going out to sea, when the winds arose, and the waves became a little rough, I found a difficulty to keep my legs on the deck, but I tumbled and tossed about like a porpoise on the water : at last I caught hold of a rope that was floating about, and then I was enabled to stand upright. So when in prayer a multitude of troublous thoughts invade your peace, or when the winds and waves of temptations arise, look out for the rope, lay hold of it, and stay yourself on the faithfulness of God in his covenant with his people, and in his promises. Hold fast by that rope, and you shall stand.

Betroth thyself to Christ. The covenant of grace is the jointure which God settles only upon Christ's spouse. Rebecca had not the jewels and costly raiment till she was promised to become Isaac's wife. Gen. xxiv. 53. "All the promises are yea and amen in Christ." If once thou resignest Christ, with him thou resignest them. He that owns the tree has a right to all the fruit on it.

Prayer.

As columns of air, if ever so high and broad, could have no weight if the air itself have no weight, so repetitions of prayer, if unimportant, if ever so frequent and constant, can have no efficacy—having in themselves no efficacy.

The energies of nature are explored, and made to work for man. Steam is not suffered to evaporate, but turned into physical strength. The wind that bloweth where it listeth is arrested in its course, and made in its passage to do us service. The torrent, in its progress, is employed for our purposes ; but prayer, the spiritual element of the new creation, which has been proved to have a control over the

elements of the natural world ; nay, which once stopped the sun in its course, how is it neglected and undervalued ! Yet where can we find a mightier power ?

We are apt to feel as if, by our prayers, we laid God under obligations to serve us ; as if one feeble, imperfect service were “ profitable to him.” Suppose some poor beggar should say of a rich nobleman, ‘ He is under great obligations to me.’—And when asked why ? should answer, “ I have been every day for a great many years, and told him a long story of my wants, and asked him to help me.” You can see how absurd this appears ; and yet it is precisely similar to our conduct, except, indeed, that ours is much more absurd, because the disparity between God and us is infinitely greater than can exist between any two mortals.

Sequester yourselves from all earthly employments, and set apart some time for solemn preparation to meet God in duty. You cannot come hot, reeking out of the world into God’s presence, but you will find the influence of it in your duties. It is with the heart a few minutes since plunged in the world, now at the feet of God, just as with the sea after a storm, which still continues working muddy and disquiet, though the wind be laid and storm over : thy heart must have some time to settle. There are few musicians that can take down a lute or viol, and play presently upon it, without some time to tune it. When thou goest to God in any duty, take thy heart aside, and say, O my soul, I am now addressing myself to the greatest work that ever a creature was employed about. I am going into the awful presence of God, about business of everlasting moment.

Edward VI. (at a time when Sir John Cheek, one of his tutors, was sick,) asking one morning, “ how his tutor did ?” was answered that “ he was supposed to be near death, and had been actually given over by his physicians.” “ No,” replied the king, “ he will not die this time, for I have been wrestling for him to-day with God in prayer, and I have had an answer of peace ; I know he will recover.” And the event corresponded. Christ also prays for the spiritual and eternal life of his people ; nor prays only, but prevails.—SPENCER.

There is a story, how the Castle of Truth being (by the king of Jerusalem) left to the guard and keeping of his best servant Zeal: the king of Arabia (with an infinite host) came against it, begirt it round with an irresistible siege, cut off all passages, all reliefs, all hopes of friends, meat, or ammunition. Which Zeal perceiving, and seeing how extremity had brought him almost to shake hands with Despair, he calls his council of war about him, and discovers the sadness of his condition, the strength of his enemy, the violence of the siege, and the impossibility of conveying either messages or letters to the great king his master, from whom they might receive new strength and encouragement. Whereupon (the necessity of the occasion being so great) they all conclude but to deliver the castle, (though upon very hard terms) into the hands of the enemy. But Zeal staggers at the resolution, and being loth to lose Hope, as long as Hope had any aid or thread to hang by, he told them he had one friend or companion in the castle, who was so wise, so valiant, and so fortunate, that to him, and to his exploits alone, he would deliver the management of their safety. This was Prayer, the chaplain of the great king, and the priest to that colony. Hence Prayer was called for, and all proceedings debated. He presently arms himself with Humility, Clemency, Sincerity, and Fervency; and, in despite of the enemy, makes his way through, came to the king his master, and with such moving passions enters his ears, that presently forces are levied, which returning under the conduct of Prayer, raise the siege, overthrow the king of Arabia, make spoil of his camp, and give to the castle of Truth her first noble liberty: which performed, Zeal crowns Prayer with wreaths of laurel, sets him on his right hand, and says for his sake Divinity shall ever march in the first rank of honour.— *IBID.*

It is said of Archimedes, that famous mathematician of Syracuse, who having by his art framed a curious instrument, if he could but have told how to fix it, it would have raised the very foundations of the whole earth. Such an instrument is prayer, which if it be set upon God, and fixed in heaven, it will fetch earth up to heaven, change earthly

thoughts into heavenly conceptions, turn flesh into spirit, metamorphose nature into grace, and earth into heaven.—
IBID.

If a great king should encourage a poor man in his suit, and say unto him, "Alas, poor man I perceive thy distress ; do but draw up thy petition, and I will give thee a satisfactory answer ;" this would be a ground of great hope. But if he shall say, "Go to my secretary, and bid him draw it up thus and thus, and in this manner," would not this be a matter of great comfort? Yea, but if he shall say to the prince his son, standing by him, "Do you present this poor man's petition into my hands," what unspeakable comfort must this needs be! And just thus God dealeth with his children. God heareth our prayers, the blessed Spirit draweth them up, and Jesus Christ the Son of God presenteth them to his Father. Without all doubt, great is the comfort of that poor soul that can by prayer have two or three walks a day upon this Mount Tabor, and with holy Moses converse with God in three persons, on the Horeb of fervent prayer.—
IBID.

There is no man in his right wits would come as a suitor to his prince, and bring his accuser with him, who is ready to testify and prove to his face his treason and rebellion ; much less would any person present himself before so great a majesty to make petition for some benefit after he had killed his sovereign's only son and heir, having still in his hand the bloody weapon wherewith he committed that horrid act. There is no adulteress so shamefully impudent, as to desire pardon of her jealous husband while she retains her lover. If any be so shameless to make suits in this odious manner, they are sure to be repulsed, and find wrath and vengeance, where they look for grace and mercy. But thus do they behave themselves towards God, who, remaining polluted with their sins, do offer up their prayers unto him ; for they bring their accusers, even their defiled consciences, and crying sins which continually accuse and condemn them, and call for their due judgment and punishment which they have deserved. They bring the weapon into God's presence, (even their sins,) whereby they have

crucified afresh the only Son of God; and they present themselves into God's presence to sue for grace, embracing still with ardent affection the world and worldly vanities, with whom they have often committed spiritual whoredom, with a purpose to continue still in their former uncleanness. And therefore let not such fondly imagine that God will hear them, and grant their suits, but rather expect in his terrible wrath he will take vengeance on them, and turn their temporary afflictions into everlasting punishments.—
IBID.

It is reported of a nobleman in this kingdom, that he had a ring given him by the queen, with this promise, That if he sent that ring at any time when he was in danger, she would remember him, and relieve him. This was a great privilege from a prince, yet it is known to many what that was subject unto; he might be in such distress as the queen could not be able to help him, or, though she were able, (as she was in that case,) yet the ring might be sent, and not delivered. Now then consider what the Lord doth to us. He hath given us this privilege, he hath given us prayer, as it were, this ring; he hath given us that to use, and tells us whatsoever our case is, whatsoever we are, whatsoever we stand in need of, whatsoever distress we are in, do but send this up to me, (saith he,) do but deliver up this message to me of prayer, and I will be sure to relieve thee. And most certain it is, whatsoever case we are in, when we send up our prayers to God, they are sure to be conveyed; for we send them to one that is able and ready to help us, which a prince many times is not able, or not willing, to perform.—
IBID.

A man that is wounded may cry, and call upon the surgeon to have some ease of his pain; but if he will not have the splinter, or ball extracted, that sticketh fast in the flesh, and causeth the grief, he may cry long enough, but all in vain. And if people should pray to God to stay the rage and fury of the burning when a house is on fire, and themselves in the mean time pour on oil, or throw on fuel, there will be but small hope of quenching the same. So there can be no comfortable return of our prayers unto God till sin be

removed. It is but folly to seek unto God by prayer, till the partition wall of sin that is betwixt us and him be broken down, at least in our intentions; or while we continue to feed and cherish our lusts. It is sin that crosseth and hindereth the effect and fruit of prayer, like those heathens of whom the cynic made this observation:—That they prayed indeed to their gods for health, but, at the very same time when they prayed, they used such excess as could not but greatly impair their health, and so wilfully deprived themselves of what they prayed for.—IBID.

Walk in the company of sinful thoughts all the day, and thou wilt hardly shut the door upon them when thou goest into the closet. You have taught them to be bold. They will now plead acquaintance with thee, and crowd in after thee like little children, who, if you play with them, and carry them much in your arms, will cry after you, when you would be rid of their company.

Faith grounded on the promises. Psalm cxix. 49, 50, 147, *Remember thy word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to trust.* To pray in faith is to go as far as the promise goes, to believe that God is a Father, and being a Father he will not keep any good thing from his child. A beggar never goes from an housekeeper's door, so long as he shall have an alms; no more doth a believing soul go from the throne of grace, so long as he believes God will hear; but if he leave off the words of prayer, he doth not leave off the suit of prayer.

Persevering prayer is the building of the soul towards heaven. Holy men should pray as builders build; first they lay the foundation, next make the walls, then they set up timber work, and so go on till the work be finished; so a godly soul reaches higher and higher, till at last the prayer reaches unto heaven. 2 Chron. xxx. 27, the prayer of the godly priests *came up to his holy habitation, even unto heaven.*

We should do with our hearts in prayer, as in the winding up of a bucket; if two or three windings will not fetch it up, we will wind it higher, till it comes up; so our hearts should not be at the same pin, but we should wind them up

higher and higher; so, though we get not the thing wholly that we desire, yet we should get our hearts nearer God.

We know God hears not sinners. How do you know that? may some say; why, by experience, by the word, and example. A drunkard prays against drunkenness, that God would heal it in him: all the world may see that God doth not hear his prayer, because he doth not cure him, but lets him go on in his sin; thou mayest see God hears not his prayers. If a man lie upon his deathbed, and send for all the physicians in a country to come to him, yet we know he is not cured so long as his deadly disease remains upon him. So when I see a man's malice, pride, &c., lie upon him, ordinarily and usually, notwithstanding all his prayers, I know God hears not his prayers.

God gives his children commonly their prayers with an overplus, more than they have faith or face to ask; as Naaman, when Gehazi asked one talent, would needs force two upon him. Abraham asked a child of God, when he wanted an heir in whom he might live when dead. Now God promises a son, and more than so, a numerous offspring; yea, more still, such an offspring, that in his offspring "all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." Jacob desired but God's pass, under the protection of which he might go and return safely, with food and raiment enough to keep him alive. Gen. xxviii. 20. Well, this he shall have, but God thinks it not enough, and therefore sends him home with two bands, who went out a poor fugitive, with little besides his pilgrim's staff. Solomon prays for wisdom, and God throws in wealth and honour. 2 Chron. i. 10. The woman of Canaan begs a crumb, as much as we would cast to a dog, and Christ gives her a child's portion. She came to have her sick child made well, and with it she hath the life of her own soul again given her. Yea, Christ puts the key of his treasure into her own hand, and leaves her as it were to serve herself: "Be it unto thee even as thou wilt." Matt. xv. 28.—SPENCER.

So pray as if thou wert taken up, and presented before God sitting on his royal throne on high, with millions of

millions of his glorious servitors ministering unto him in heaven. Certainly the face of such a court would awe thee. If thou wert but at the bar before a judge, and had a glass of a quarter of an hour's length turned up, being all the time thou hast allowed thee to improve thee for the begging of thy life, now forfeited and condemned, wouldest thou spare any of this little time to gaze upon the court, to see what clothes this man hath on, and what lace another wears? God shame us for our folly in mis-spending our praying seasons! Is it not thy life thou art begging at God's hands? and that a better, I trow, than the malefactor sues for of his mortal judge; and dost thou know whether thou shalt have so long as a quarter of an hour allowed thee when thou art kneeling down? And yet wilt thou trifle or betray indifference in the matter? If thou believest not God to be so great and glorious, why dost thou pray? If thou dost, why no better? Why no closer, and compact in thy thoughts?—IBID.

Will you complain for want of that which, if you had without grace, would be your undoing? The heathen tells us a fable concerning a man who desired that all whatever he touched might become gold; and (say they) it was granted him by the gods. When, therefore, he came to eat his meat, he touched it; so his meat was turned to gold, and so the man was starved. The moral of this is, that many a man would be utterly undone if he had that which he most desired. And let me tell you this—without the grace of God our earthly nature would covet the things which make up an earthly portion; yea, we should desire that all which we touched might be gold—and leave our souls to starve and be undone in the midst of our fancied abundance.

Diligence in our affairs is indispensable, if we would prosper; but the work is then but half done. In order to insure success, we must mix up prayer with it. There was a husbandman that always sowed good seed, but never had good corn; at last a neighbour came to him and said, I will tell you what probably may be the cause of it—you do not steep your seed. No truly, said the other, nor did I ever hear that seed must be steeped. Yes, surely, said his neigh-

bour, and I will tell you how—it must be steeped in *prayer*.

To be sincere with God, and more especially in the matter of prayer, is more unusual than we are apt to think. There appears to be great weight and knowledge of human self-deceit, in the confession of St. Augustin, who acknowledges that though his conscience obliged him to pray when young against youthful lusts, his remaining inclination to them was such, that he believes that he wished at bottom not to be heard. *He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool, says Solomon.* The strain of our prayers may tempt us to think we are sincere, when practice immediately after shall prove the contrary. Epictetus makes mention of a courtier, who, no doubt, thought his resolution true, that upon being restored from banishment, he would never more frequent levees of state, or ambitiously seek places and emoluments; but, alas! (says Epictetus,) letters of invitation to court from Cæsar met him as soon as he left my house; and instantly he became more courtly than ever, and could return the gods thanks for the honours heaped upon him.

No written prayer, unaided by devotional exercises drawn from the heart, can suit the ever-varying circumstances in the divine life. Its plans and designs against its spiritual enemies must be formed, like the plans of a general upon the field of battle, from an actual observation; as he regulates his movements from actual inspection, makes his arrangements on the spot according to the existing circumstances in which he is pleased: there are dangers which could not be foreseen, and positions taken up by the enemy, as well as calamities of war to be met, and encountered with on the spot. Such is the actual state of every soul which is actively fighting the good fight of faith—the soul is a little world where nothing is at rest, but all its powers and faculties are continually exercised in the war between the flesh and the spirit. The soul, which really lives to God, is engaged in a perpetual warfare. Look at a general. His plans and designs cannot be fixed and stationary, but are ever varying. As he regulates his movements, so must the believer. His plans and designs as to his spiritual enemies can only arise

from the actual circumstances in which he is placed. To mortify sins, and keep down the risings of corruption—to resist the encroachments of a worldly spirit, and the temptations of Satan—to be making fresh advances in faith, love, and hope, is the daily business in hand; but our losses, trials, temptations, enemies to be resisted, are always presenting new and various aspects, and prayer must be suited to the special wants and temptations of the day; the circumstances of yesterday in the spiritual life will differ from the present day, or those of to-morrow. And as is the case, so must be the prayer. A watchful spirit must preside over all, and prayer, in all its varied modes and exercises, be incessantly called into action to put down our spiritual foes, and help us to be going forwards.

Many are the lawful amusements of the Christian, but that which gives the highest zest to his life is the spirit of prayer. He should be careful not to step aside, but dwell in the atmosphere of prayer. Like the ambient air, which yields, yet fills all space, and wide interfused embraces the whole earth as the principle which supports life, quickening, and invigorating wherever it comes—such should be the spirit of prayer, till through every space of life it be interfused with all your employments, and wherever you are, and whatever you do, embrace you on every side. Like a pleasure ever omnipresent, never impeding, but gently leaving room for, and indescribably animating, and giving pleasure to every other enjoyment.

Prayer is the great index of the divine life in the soul. It evidences both its existence, and the degree and vigour with which it flourishes. Thus, when we awake out of sleep our wants begin, and our desires are stirred up for the supply of them. And few things mark more distinctly spiritual life, than the earnest desire of the heart after spiritual blessings. When the Christian awakes to life, then the breath of prayer proves that life. “Behold he prayeth.” This is indeed the spiritual barometer of the soul. Whatever outward storm, whatever clouds and darkness may surround him, if the barometer of prayer be steadily rising, his soul is on the way to higher, happier, and more sunny days.

When the plague raged in London, it was a common practice to put over the doors of the infected houses this inscription, "Lord have mercy on us." On the doors of every house where the worship of God is not set up, great need have we to write the above, for there is a plague, a curse in it.

We know that the infinite God cannot be moved, or actually drawn nearer to us by prayer, but prayer draws the Christian nearer to God. If a boat is attached to a large vessel by a rope, the person in the former does not bring the ship nearer to him by pulling the rope, but he brings the rope and himself in it, nearer to the ship. So, the more frequently we pray, the nearer we bring ourselves to the Lord most High. The Christian is therefore enjoined to "pray without ceasing:" not that he can be always engaged in the positive act, but he ought to have what I call *a holy aptitude of prayer*. The bird is not always on the wing, but is ready to fly in an instant; so the believer is not always on the wing of prayer, but he has such a gracious aptitude for this service, that he is prepared in an instant, when in danger or need, to fly for refuge to God.

We are more or less disposed for our respective duties according as our diligence, constancy, and seriousness in secret prayer is more or less. The root that produces the beautiful and flourishing tree, with all its spreading branches, verdant leaves, and refreshing fruit, that which gains for it sap, life, vigour, and fruitfulness, is all unseen; and the farther and deeper the roots spread beneath, the more the tree expands above. Christians! if you wish to prosper, if you long to bring forth the fruits of the Spirit, strike your roots wide in private prayer.

There is a happy connexion between all the parts of prayer, and the full discharge of one leads on to another. By an ingenious contrivance near some of the collieries, and in other places where the ground allows of it, the full and empty carriages, or vessels, being connected together, those which have been emptied are, from time to time, raised up an ascent by the descending of those that have been filled. In this way, let the descent of God's mercies, and the gifts

bestowed out of his fulness, raise your empty vessels to receive again and again, from his inexhaustible treasury, all that you need. Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.—

BICKERSTETH.

We miscarry through want of faith. Prayer is the bow, the promise is the arrow, faith is the hand which draws the bow, and sends the arrow with the heart's message to heaven. The bow without the arrow is of no use, and the arrow without the bow is of little worth, and both without the strength of the hand to no purpose. Neither the promise without prayer, nor prayer without the promise, nor both without faith, avail the Christian anything. What was said of the Israelites, "they could not enter in because of unbelief," the same may be said of many of our prayers, they cannot enter heaven, because they are not put up in faith.

As the naturally weak ivy which, if it had no support, would only grovel on the earth, by adhering to some neighbouring tree, or building, or entwining itself about it, thus grows and flourishes, and rises higher and higher, and the more the winds blow, and the tempest beats against it, the closer it adheres, and the nearer it clings, and the faster its fibres embrace that which supports it, and it remains uninjured; so the Christian, naturally weak, by prayer connects himself with the Almighty, and the more dangers and difficulties beset him, the more closely they unite him to his God; he reaches towards, and bears upon, and clings to, the throne of grace, and is strengthened with divine strength.

The smoke and sparks that rise from a furnace, are carried that way where the wind lies; so, if thy heart be to the world, thou canst not prevent thy thoughts and meditations from driving thither. Then, and not till then, will prayer ascend like a pillar of incense from the altar, when there is a holy calmness on thy spirit, and the boisterous winds of inordinate cares and affections to the world are laid.

Providence.

Eagerness and anxiety are, as it were, the two features of the mind, reaching out into time future, darting forward, and apprehending some imagined good. Anxiety sensitively forecasting many evils, some of which never come. Eagerness is the raging fever of youth—anxiety the slow fever of later years. Both these dispositions, though in different ways, dishonour God, and disturb our peace. When very eager about a matter, we should suspect all is not right—when very anxious, we may be equally sure something is wrong, and that we are distrusting God's providence.

The sun may, in some sense, be justly styled *anima mundi*, or the soul of our revolving world. So universally pervading is its influence, that nothing is totally hid from the heat thereof. In a greater or less degree, it pervades the whole region of air, penetrates the inmost recesses of the earth, and distributes a competent portion of its beams through the vast expanse of waters. Hence in, and on our planet there is no such thing as absolute darkness, truly and strictly so called. If our eyes were constructed in the same manner as those of subterraneous animals, we should, like them, be able to see, without artificial help, at any distance below the surface of the earth, and by night as well as day. Not less universal than the solar agency is the all-directing providence of God. Nothing is exempted from its notice; nothing is excepted from its control. Chance, like absolute darkness, has no real existence. If some events seem fortuitous, it is because we have not a sufficiency of knowledge by which to trace the combinations that necessarily produced them; just as some place and some seasons seem totally dark to us; because our optic system is so framed and attempered, that on various occasions the human eye is unable to collect those scattered and proportionably expanded rays, from which no place whatever is entirely excluded.

We are like unskilful men going to the house of some curious artist; so long as he is about his work, we despise

it as confused ; but when it is finished, admire it as excellent ; whilst the passages of providence are on us, all is confusion, but when the fabric is reared, glorious. Let there be the careful observance of divine providence towards yourselves in particular. You will find the unspeakable advantage of it. It will make God more present with you than ever. It will set home the obligation of every duty, and the enormity of every sin upon the conscience, in a manner far more forcible than ever. It will also give every mercy a richness and value, which it could not derive from any other source ; just as the man who has been fed at a distance, by the stream of a prince's bounty, would feel his heart drawn with far stronger bonds of love and gratitude, were he to be brought into his presence, and receive his favours immediately from his own hand. God is the Lord of Hosts ; he is the great commander of heaven and earth ; he it is that directs the conflicts, neither are any put to try mastery, no field pitched, no battle fought, but by his special order and commission, and all for the accomplishment of his glory. But it befalleth us, as it doth with them which stand in the same level, wherein two large armies are ready to engage, they conceive them to be a disordered multitude, whom notwithstanding, if they behold from a high hill, they will see how every one serveth under his own colours. Even so men which behold the state of the world with the eyes of flesh and blood, dim by reason of the weakness of their judgments and weakness of their affections, think all things are out of order, that there is nothing but confusion and disorder. That the worse men are, the better they fare ; and they fare the worse, the better they are. But if they did but once ascend into the sanctuary of God, and judge of occurrences by heavenly principles, then they would confess, that no army on earth can be better marshalled than the great army of all the creatures of heaven and earth ; and that, notwithstanding all appearance to the contrary, all is well, and will end well ; that God, who is the God of order, will bring light out of darkness, and order out of the greatest confusion, could they have but patience, and let him alone with his own work.—SPENCER.

It is reckoned that the Hebrew camp wanted not less than ninety-four thousand four hundred and sixty-six bushels of manna every day; and that in the whole of the forty years that they were travelling about in the wilderness, they must have consumed one thousand three hundred and seventy millions two thousand six hundred bushels. How large are the temporal wants of all mankind! Yet they are small when compared with the bounty of God.

Strengthen thy faith on the providence of God for the things of this life. A distrustful heart is ever thoughtful; whatever he is doing, his thoughts will be on that he fears he shall lose. When the merchant's adventure is insured, (that whatever comes he cannot lose much,) his heart then is at rest, he can eat his bread with quiet, and sleep without dreaming of shipwrecks and pirates; while another, whose estate is at sea, and fears what will become of it, O how is this poor man haunted wherever he is going, whatever he is doing, with disquieting thoughts? If he hears the wind but a little loud, he cannot sleep, for fear of his ship at sea. Truly, thus a soul by faith rolled on the promise in prayer, will find a happy deliverance from that disturbance which another is pestered with; wherefore God in particular directs us to lay this burden from our shoulders on his, when we go to pray, that no bye-thoughts, arising from these our cares, may disturb us. "Be careful for nothing, but let your requests be made known to God." Phil. iv. As if he had said, leave me to take care for your work, and mind you do mine; if things go amiss in your estates, names, families, I will take the blame, and give you leave to say God was not careful enough for you. If we have but a faithful servant, (who we believe looks to business as carefully as our own selves,) this makes us go forth with a free and quiet spirit, and not trouble ourselves with what it done at homes when we are abroad. Oh! then, let us be ashamed if our faith on God's providence be not much more able to ease us of the burthen of distracting cares.

The wisdom of the Creator is discovered by observing the league of the elements from whence all mixed bodies arise. Of how different qualities are earth, water, air, fire! Yet

all combine together without the destruction of their enmity; that is as necessary to preserve nature as their friendship. Can there be imagined a greater discord than that which subsists in the parts of the elementary world, and a greater concord in the whole? To reduce them to such an *equilibrium*, that all their operations promote the same end, proves that there is a providence that has an absolute dominion over all things, and tempers them accordingly. The same wisdom is manifest in regulating the contending forces of good and evil. How opposite are these two great powers, as only calculated to work the destruction one of the other—yet each are bringing forth the designs of God's providence. Amidst the seeming discord there reigns a perfect harmony. Nothing is suffered to destroy their *equilibrium*; unitedly they are working for the same end, and bringing about one grand and final result.

Supposing, at rising in the morning, we found a loaf added to our provisions, which we could be certain that neither we nor any human being had put there, we should then have no difficulty in saying that the Lord had sent it. Yet we actually find such a loaf every morning added to our provisions, and it is equally true that God has sent it; and because he has sent it in a less direct and extraordinary manner, namely, by strengthening our own powers, and blessing our labours to obtain it, and because this is an ordinary case, and what is taking place all the world over, therefore we find it difficult to realise in it, his goodness, his providence, and himself.—KRUMMACHER.

If we see a watch which has been taken to pieces, and look on the various pins and wheels which are lying in confusion, we can little understand the admirable machine, and the beauty and harmony they will present to us when adjusted in their several places. And so the great variety and acts of Providence appear to us but the most absolute disorder and confusion in their present aspect, but soon, when we shall behold them no longer in a glass darkly, but within the veil, they will exhibit the most perfect harmony.

A miracle perpetuated soon ceases to appear a miracle. There is an eastern story of a boy having challenged his

teacher to prove to him the existence of God by working a miracle. The teacher, who was a priest, got a large vessel filled with earth, wherein he deposited a kernel in the boy's presence, and bade him pay attention. In the place where the kernel was put, a green shoot suddenly appeared; the shoot became a stem; the stem put forth leaves and branches, which soon spread over the whole apartment. It then budded with blossoms, which, dropping off, left golden fruits in their place, and in the short space of one hour there stood a noble tree in the place of the little seed. The youth, overcome with amazement, exclaimed, "Now I know that there is a God, for I have seen his power!" The priest smiled at him and said, "Simple child, do you only now believe? Does not what you have just beheld take place in innumerable instances year after year only by a slow process? But is it the less marvellous on that account?"—Krummacher.

Let us suppose any one of you to be under severe domestic affliction, or embarrassment for debt, for instance, and threatened with arrest in default of immediate payment; you wrestle with God in prayer that he would help you, and his providence sends you the very help you want, your heart is then melted with thankfulness, and you are disposed to say, "Truly the Lord liveth, and seeth, he heareth and answereth prayer." But suppose that very night your house is broken into, your money stolen, and all your embarrassments return. Again, suppose that with much laborious industry you have acquired the means of renting a farm, you employ your whole little capital upon it, and you pray God that it would please him to bless your labour with increase for the support of your family, and then you behold the seed spring up, and your fields bountifully verdant. Thanks be to God, you will say, I now see his goodness to his creatures. But in a few weeks, perhaps a dry summer, or a season of excessive rain, disappoints you of all. What is your language now in cases of this sort? Do you not call them hard trials, and account them the more severe because they have come upon you in the ordinary way of Providence? Had they been more like Job's afflictions, something out of the common way, you are apt to imagine that you could have

borne them better; you would then have seen that they came from God, and you are perhaps vain enough to suppose you would have displayed extraordinary patience under them. For instance, had the money that you had so wonderfully received, been melted in your coffer by a thunderbolt, then you would have said, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away." Job. i. 21. But now, as it has been carried off by thieves, you are apt to think these words inapplicable to your case; and as you cannot think that it is the Lord who has taken it away, you are presently open to another suggestion, "Perhaps it was not the Lord who gave it to me, else why should he not have preserved it to me?"—*IBID.*

The providence of God to his saints here, while on this low bottom of earth, are mixed and party-coloured, as was signified by the speckled horses in Zechariah's vision. Zech. i. 8. Red and white, peace and war, joy and sorrow, chequer our days. Earth is a middle place, between heaven and hell, and so is our state here, it partakes of both; we go up hill and down hill, till we get to our journey's end; yea, we find the deepest slough nearest to our Father's house. Death I mean, into which all the other troubles of our life fall, as streams into some great river, with which they all end, and are swallowed up.

You believe in the existence of lately discovered planets, and in other astronomical facts which you yourself have never observed, and you would think it absurd scepticism in any man to doubt them. Why? Because all who have used the proper glasses, and carefully made the proper observations, concur in affirming the truth. Now you will find no sincere Christian of long standing and observation but will tell you he has had many, and decisive proofs in their number and coincidence that his prayer was heard, and practically answered in the occurrences of his life. However widely devout men disagree in other points, in this they are well agreed; and very many have declared that things have never gone well with them when their morning prayers have been distracted, cold, and languid. To suppose it is with all these witnesses the dream of superstition, is not less

irrational than it would be to suppose that all the observers of the Georgium Sidus, of Pallas, and Ceres, have been deceived by meteors, or some defect in their glasses. To say that the majority of persons have no such evidence, who do not pray aright, and live right, in order to secure answers to their prayers, would be as idle an objection as that the planets just mentioned have not been seen by those who never looked for them in a proper direction, and by the aid of a proper telescope.—HANNAH MOORE'S LIFE.

Throughout the natural world we see everything, however interesting or valuable in itself, serving some other purpose. We are refreshed with the fragrance, and delighted with the beauty of the vernal bloom; and most certainly this was the purpose of the great Benefactor; but evidently not the chief purpose: the bloom disappears, and other objects succeed still more valuable, because more intimately conducive to human comfort. Yet this greater benefit is really conferred but by the way: for, as the blossom contained the embryo of fruit, so the fruit contains the embryo of trees. Can we suppose that this plan of successive advancement does not hold as fully in providence as in nature, or that any event can terminate in itself in the one more than in the other? But if there be the same fruitfulness, and the same progression, what a view does it give one of the grandeur of final results, since our own observation tells us that there is no restriction within a narrow circle, in providential, as in natural causes and effects. In the latter the blossom produces fruit, the fruit seed, the seed a tree, and there it begins again; but in providence, every succeeding stage of the progress involves new combinations, and consequently teems with new powers; so that in this great sphere of divine action, there is illimitable improvement to be reckoned on.

The poison which is conveyed in the denial of a special and peculiar providence, carries its antidote in its own arrant nonsense. According to this scheme there could be no room for prayer. Thus the whole scheme of this world would be nothing more than a great and stupendous automaton: the framer of which it may be impossible not to admire; but with whom, in our daily concerns, and the course

of our lives, we have no more directly to do, than we should have with a clockmaker, who had furnished us with a clock which went so well as never to require its maker's interference.

Believe in God's providence. Mungo Park, an enterprising traveller who went out to explore the river Niger, while on his return from it, on his way to the river Gambia, was robbed by some Foulahs, and stripped of everything. At this time he was in a desert destitute of every necessary of life, and five hundred miles from any European settlement. In a state of despair he thought that he must perish, but while he glanced his eye around he beheld a moss in flower, and struck with the delicate conformation of its root, leaves, and capsule, he thought, is it possible that this little plant could have bloomed and blossomed here, if there was not a superintending providence presiding even in the wilderness? If God can care for a little moss, will he not care for me? From this moment his heart was encouraged, he felt inwardly strengthened, and committed himself to the care of Providence. And did the Lord disappoint his confidence in him? He suffered it to be tried for three days. At that time a slave-merchant at Kumatia was passing on his way, who received him, and administered to his wants. Let a believer thus reason, and trust like him.

The professors of wisdom, like the foolish Harpaste that Seneca speaks of, who, insensible of her own blindness, always complained the sun was down and the house dark, thought all things were left at random, in loose disorder, and confusion here below. Nay, some of the clearest spirits, and most virtuous among the heathen, could not reconcile the oppressions and infelicities of good men, and the prosperity of the wicked, with the rectitude and equity of the divine Providence; and expressed their discontents in the style and accent of their passions. Of this we have two eminent instances: Brutus, who, with inviolable integrity, had as a senator managed the public affairs, and with undeclining courage endeavoured to recover his country from ignominious bondage; when vanquished by the usurpers, broke out into a tragical complaint, O virtue, I worship thee as a

substantial good, a deity ; but thou art an empty name, an idol. The Emperor Titus, who was the delight of mankind for his goodness and benignity, surprised with death in his flourishing age, accused Heaven that his life was unjustly snatched from him. The ways and thoughts of God in the government of the world, are above the ways and thoughts of men, as the heavens are higher than the earth. And if his wisdom had not descended from heaven, and discovered itself in the sanctuary, we should be foolish, and like the beasts that perish.

Take the case of two persons, one of whom believes in a particular and superintending Providence, while the other regards God merely as the general governor of the world. This man is like a ship without rudder or guide on board, which is left to the mercy of the winds and waves, and constrained to yield to every storm. But the other, who has a firm belief in God's overruling and special care for his people, is like the ship which has not only a rudder, but an able pilot on board, and thus guided can sail in security.

Some have entertained the erroneous opinion that as a clock formed by an artificer, and the weights drawn up, regularly strikes the hours, and continues its motion and sound, in the absence of the artificer, so the perpetual concurrence of the Divine Providence is not necessary for the support and operations of every creature ; but nature may work of itself, and turn the wheels of all things within its compass. But the instance is defective, there being an extreme disparity between the work of an artificer, in forming a clock, whose matter is independent of him, and God's giving the first being to the creatures with powers to act by his actual concurrence : for every creature is maintained by a successive continual production. And every fresh production is no other than a new creation, and calls for the exercise of the same miraculous power as was employed in the formation of the first creature.

Reason.

Reason is God's candle in man. But as a candle must first be lighted, ere it will enlighten, so reason must be illuminated by divine grace, ere it can savingly discern spiritual things.

If any divine mystery seems incredible, 'tis from the corruption of our reason, not from reason itself; from its darkness, not its light; and as reason is obliged to correct the errors of sense when 'tis deceived either by some vicious quality in the organ, or by the distance of the object, or by the falseness of the medium, that corrupts the image in conveying it, so is it the office of faith to reform the judgment of reason, when, either from its own weakness or the height of things spiritual, 'tis mistaken about them.

By the light of reason we cast a sort of glaring illusion around ourselves, but if confided in, it tends only to obscure our vision of more exalted glories. Illuminate this town, the streets are light while the heavens are lost in darkness; but when the day breaks forth, both the earth and the sky become visible. So *the sparks of our own kindling*, while they shed an artificial brilliancy for a short distance around us, involve the scenes above even in darker shadows than those of night; but if the dayspring from on high dawn on our souls, we have clear views both of earth and heaven.

Redemption.

If I were to represent to you in a figure the condition of man as a sinner, and his recovery by the cross of Christ, I should do it somewhat in this way. Suppose a large graveyard, surrounded by a high wall, with only one entrance, which is by a large iron gate that is fast bolted and barred.

Within these walls are thousands and tens of thousands of human beings, of all ages, and of all classes, by one epidemic disease bending to the grave which yearns to swallow them up. This is the condition of man as a sinner. And while man was in this deplorable condition, Mercy, the darling attribute of Deity, came down and stood at the gate, looked at the scene, and weeping over it exclaimed, "O that I might enter, I would bind up their wounds, I would relieve their sorrows, I would save their souls." While Mercy stood at the gate weeping, an embassy of angels, commissioned from the court of heaven to some other world, passing over, paused at the sight; (Heaven forgave the pause;) and, seeing Mercy standing there, they said, "Mercy, Mercy, canst thou not enter? Canst thou look on the scene, and not pity? canst thou pity, and not relieve?" Mercy replied, "I can see," and in tears added, "I can pity, but I cannot relieve." "Why canst thou not enter?" "Oh," said Mercy, "Justice has barred the gate against me, and I cannot, I must not enter it." At this moment Justice himself appeared, as if to watch the gate. The angels inquired of him, why he would not let Mercy enter? Justice replied, "My law is broken, and it must be honoured. Die they, or Justice must." At this moment there appeared amongst the angels a form like unto the Son of God; who addressing himself to Justice said, "What are thy demands?" Justice replied, "My terms are stern and rigid; I must have sickness for their health; I must have ignominy for their honour; I must have death for their life; without shedding of blood there is no remission." "Justice," said the Son of God, "I accept thy terms; on *me* be this wrong. Let Mercy enter." "When," said Justice, "wilt thou perform this promise?" "Four thousand years hence; upon the hill of Calvary, without the gates of Jerusalem, I will perform it, in my own person." The deed was prepared, and signed in the presence of God. Justice was satisfied; and Mercy entered, preaching salvation in the name of Jesus. The deed was committed to the patriarchs, by them to the kings of Israel, and the prophets; by them it was preserved till Daniel's seventy weeks were accomplished. Then, at the appointed

time, Justice appeared on the hill of Calvary, and Mercy presented to him the important deed. "Where," said Justice, "is the Son of God?" "Behold him," replied Mercy, "at the bottom of the hill, bearing his own cross." She then departed and stood aloof. At the hour of trial Jesus ascended the hill; while in his train followed his weeping church. Justice immediately presented to him the deed, saying, "This is the day when the bond is to be executed." When he received it, did he tear it to pieces, and give it to the winds of heaven? Oh no; he nailed it to the cross, exclaiming, "It is finished!" Justice called down holy fire to consume the sacrifice. Holy fire descended; it swallowed up his humanity, but when it touched his divinity, it expired. And there was darkness over the whole heavens, but "glory to God in the highest; on earth peace, good will to men."—CHRISTIAN EVANS.

No one can be said to meditate aright on redemption by Christ, who does not behold God's manifold wisdom, as well as his other perfections, displayed therein. As we conclude him a very unskilful observer of a curious picture, or statue, who only takes notice of its dimensions in general, or the matter of which it is composed, its colouring, or frame work, without considering the symmetry and proportion of all its parts, the mind, the genius, and intelligence shown in its design—so it is unworthy and below a Christian to be able only to say that Christ is a Saviour, or to have a general idea of this scheme of mercy, without having his thoughts suitably affected with the wonders of love and grace which it contains, and the design of all, and the adaptation of every part, to set forth the glory of the triune Jehovah.

Religion.

Religion is the golden chain, which God lets down from heaven, with a link for every person in this room, inviting each to take hold, that you may be drawn by it to himself.

You can readily perceive how disagreeable it would be to be linked to one whom you disliked, and drawn by him whither soever he wills ; but you would gladly be drawn and guided in everything by the person whom you ardently loved. There is this difference between the Christian and the sinner. However reluctant and full of hatred, still the sinner is controlled by God ; the Christian is equally in his hands, but is drawn by the cords of love.

Her religion was all text, at once compendious and comprehensive—in its sacred, a span long—but in its moral dimensions as large as life, and all its charities. It was always in preparation and ready for use.—HANNAH MORE'S LIFE.

Religion is by St. Paul described to be “the spirit of power,” in opposition to the spirit of fear, as all sin is by Simplicius well described to be “impotency and weakness.” Sin, like a poison, by its deadly infusions into the soul of man, wastes, and eats out the innate vigour of the soul, and casts it into such a deep lethargy, as that it is not able to recover itself ; but religion, like the balsam of life, being once conveyed into the soul, awakens and enlivens it, and makes it renew its strength like an eagle, and mount strongly upwards towards heaven ; and so uniting the soul to God, the centre of life and strength, it renders it undaunted and invincible. Who can tell the inward life and vigour that the soul may be filled with, when once it is in conjunction with an Almighty essence ? There is a latent and hidden virtue in the soul of man, which then begins to discover itself when the divine spirit of religion spreads forth its influences upon it.

God treats the young believer as he treated the spies that went to discover the land of promise ; he ordered the year in plenty, and directed them to a pleasant and fruitful place, and prepared bunches of grapes of a miraculous and prodigious greatness, that they might report good things of Canaan, and invite the whole nation to attempt its conquest : so God's grace represents to the new converts, and the weak ones in faith, the pleasures and first deliciousness of religion ; and when they come to spy good things of the way that leads to heaven, they presently perceive them-

selves eased of a load of an evil conscience, of their fears of death, of the confusion of their shame; and God's Spirit gives them a cup of sensible comfort, and makes them to rejoice in their prayers, and weep with pleasure, mingled with innocent passion, and religious changes.

Some persons there are who dare not sin; they dare not omit their hours of prayer, and they are restless in their spirits till they have done; but they go to it as to execution; they stay from it as long as they can, and they drive, like Pharaoh's chariots with the wheels off, sadly, and heavily; and, besides that such persons have reserved to themselves the best part of their sacrifice, and do not give their will to God; they do not love him with all their heart; they are also soonest tempted to retire and fall off. Sextus Romanus resigned the honours and offices of the city, and betook himself to the severity of a philosophical life; but when his unusual diet, and hard labour began to pinch his flesh, and he felt his propositions smart; and that which was fine in discourse, at symposiack, or an academical dinner, began to sit uneasily upon him in the practice, he so despaired that he had like to have cast himself into the sea, to appease the labours of his religion; because he had never gone farther than to think it a fine thing to be a wise man: he would commence it, but he was loth to pay for it at the price that God and the philosopher set upon it. But he that is "grown in grace," and hath made religion habitual to his spirit, is not at ease but when he is doing the works of a new man: he rests in religion, and comforts his sorrows with thinking of his hours of prayer; and in all crosses of the world he is patient, because his joy is at hand to refresh him when he list, for he cares not so he may serve God; and if you make him poor here, he is rich there, and he counts that to be his proper service, his work, his recreation, and reward.

Beware of laying a disproportionate stress upon circumstantials, externals, and comparatively little things in religion, to the neglect of the grand and leading doctrines of the gospel. It is well to be minutely conscientious, and to have every pin, and every nail in a building properly placed:

but the building cannot subsist without the foundation and the main pillars which support the superstructure. To be always busy about pins, nails, or some ornaments of the building, to the neglect of the grand supporters of the whole fabric, is a proof of a little mind, and less grace: and that soul cannot thrive well.

The pleasures of religion are not confined to the times of actual devotion; like some perfumes, they diffuse their odours through all times and seasons, refreshing and exhilarating by the remembrance of the past, and the anticipation of the future. It is a treasure possessed when not employed; a reserve of consolation and strength, ready to be called into action when most needed; a fountain of sweets to which we may continually repair, whose waters are inexhaustible.

True religion does not resemble a few single plants, perhaps exotics, in a foreign climate, and an unwilling soil, which, raised with anxious care, a sudden frost may nip, or a sudden blight may wither; but it is the wide-spread vegetation of the meadow which springs up in one unvaried face of verdure, beauty, and fertility. There is ever a fresh fragrance flowing from the rose of Sharon, increasing in sweetness; still undiscovered tints of beauty expanding themselves to our admiring eyes. So it is with the Christian united to Christ, because he is of one spirit with Christ.

The line which divides the kingdom of God from the empire of sin is so fine, that, like the line of geometry, it is length without breadth, it occupies no part of the territories which it defines; it creates no border land, no neutral ground. "He that is not with me, is against me;" and he that gathereth not with me, scattereth abroad;" a sentence which separates the world into two classes; assigning over to the dominion of Satan the lukewarm with the hostile; and leaving them to discover, that whereas they had expected to find themselves standing at least on neutral ground, they are actually, and considerably within the frontiers of the kingdom of darkness.—HARRIS.

The religion of Christ is a jewel of inestimable, and unchangeable value, but it has been disfigured, or beautifully

set, according to the condition of the public feeling or knowledge, at different periods of the world. A pearl (it is said) of ineffable price, has been delivered into the custody of man by the eternal Son of God himself, given them not only to be their chiefest joy and pride, but to be as the very talisman of their place and safety; their symbol of life and victory. But the genius of this world is incessantly at work to convert it to its own likeness. Men have encircled it with the "*wisdom of the wise*," and its celestial brightness has been straightway surrounded with the feeble and unsteady glitter of earth-born philosophy. This inestimable diamond has been set in earthly gold, it has been made to shine in the midst of gems which had been dug up by the spirit of Mammon, and been thus brought to countenance the service of God and Mammon. And again, this elect and precious stone has been seized on by the world and the flesh, until its heavenly splendours have been dispersed and broken amidst the unhallowed flames which the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eye, and the pride of life, have poured around it.

The christian dispensation is distinguished for its simplicity in the worship of God. Superstition delights in introducing carnal rites, and values itself upon its own opinionative goodness. These men mistake the swelling of a dropsy for a substantial growth, and presume themselves to be more holy than others, for their proud singularity. Superstition is like ivy that twines about the tree, and is its seeming ornament, but draws its vital sap, and under its verdant leaves covers a carcass. Thus carnal ceremonies seem to adorn religion, but really dispirit and weaken its efficacy. The spiritual pride of the superstitious discovers itself in some in the observance of things uncommanded in religion; in others, on the contrary, in pretending to be above the use of divine ordinances.

Men's notions on the things of religion, apart from the Scriptures, are like the mules, begotten by equivocal and unnatural generations; but they make no species—they are begotten, but they can beget nothing—they can do no

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good when they are produced ; they are not what Solomon calls "the way of understanding."

Good and evil are so mingled together in this system of things, that there is scarcely any event so productive of evil as not to have some good mixed with it, direct or indirect ; and scarcely any so good as not to be attended with some proportion of evil, or at least what seems to us to be evil. Religion enables us to look at the bright and sunny side—the assurance "that all things work for good" changes the aspect of them with those who are in covenant with God. As believers we cannot indeed alter the real nature of things, but we render them, in their relation to us, very nearly the same as if their nature were really altered. Pure religion is a source of light within us, an everlasting sunshine, which we can throw on everything around, till it reflect on us what has beamed from our own serene heart ; like that great luminary in the heavens, which, ever moving through a world of darkness, is still on every side surrounded with the radiance which flows from itself, and cannot appear without converting night into the cheerfulness of day.

The views of God and happiness, which are entertained by the mind enlightened by grace, are wonderfully different from those of one who has the veil yet on his heart. We see, under a change of circumstances, what opposite conclusions are formed by men in daily life. One who views nature under a fit of the gout or an indigestion, sees nothing in it but what is gloomy ; but when restored, he is surprised to find different views breaking upon him, of beauty in the universe, and benevolence in its author. But the change has arisen not from any greater brightness of the sky, or from any happier objects that surround him, but from the mere cessation of that paroxysm which had shed, while it lasted, its own darkness on the scene. It is as little possible for one, who is blinded by sin and worldliness, to look on God and religion in the same light as that happier mind which beholds them in their truth and reality, as for one to whose eyes the sunshine has never carried light, to think of the surface of that earth on which he treads with the same feelings of

beauty and admiration as the multitudes around him, whose eyes are awake to all the colours that adorn it.

A gardener, when he transplanteth a tree out of one ground into another, before the tree take root he sets stays to it, he poureth water at the root of it daily; but when it once taketh root, he ceaseth to water it any more, and pulleth away the stays that he set to uphold it, and suffereth it to grow with the ordinary influence of the heavens. So the Lord, in planting of religion, he put to the help of miracles as helps to stay it; but when it was once confirmed and fastened, and had taken deep rooting, he took away such helps; so that, as St. Augustine hath it, "He that looketh for a miracle, is a miracle himself; for if the death of Christ will not work faith, all the miracles in the world will not do it.—SPENCER.

Let us for a moment suppose, (what can never be proved,) that mankind are now much better able to investigate the truth, and to find out their duty by themselves, than they were in former ages; and that reason can give us (the utmost it ever did or can pretend to give) a perfect system of morality. But what will that avail us, unless it can be shown that man is also perfect and uncorrupt? A religion that contains nothing more than a perfect system of morality, might perhaps suit an angel, but it is only one part, it is only a subordinate part, of the religion of a man and a sinner. It would be but very poor consolation to a nobleman expecting to be led forth for execution, to put into his hand a complete collection of the laws of his country, when the poor wretch perhaps expected a reprieve. It could serve no other purpose than to embitter his agonies, and make him see more clearly the justice of his condemnation. If you choose to do the unhappy man a real service, and to give him any substantial comfort, you must assure him that the offence for which he was going to die was forgiven him; that his sentence was reversed; that he would not only be restored to his prince's favour, but put in a way of preserving it for the future; and if his conduct afterwards was honest and upright, he should be deemed capable of enjoying the highest honours in his master's kingdom. But no one

could tell him this, or at least he would credit no one that did, except he was commissioned and authorised by the prince himself to tell him so. He might study the laws in his hands till the very moment of his execution, without ever finding out from them that he should obtain a pardon. Such, the scriptures inform us, was the state of man before Christ came into the world. The sentence of death had passed upon him, and he had no plea to offer to arrest the execution of it. Reason, you say, gives him a perfect rule to walk by. But he has already transgressed this rule, and if even this transgression were cancelled, yet if left to himself he may transgress it again the next moment. He is uneasy under his sentence, he wants forgiveness for the past, assistance for the future, and the prospect of being restored to the honours and favour of the King of heaven, which he has forfeited by rebellion ; and till you can give him this, it is an insult upon his misery to talk to him of a perfect rule of action. If this be all that reason can give him, (and it really is much more than it can give him,) he must necessarily have recourse to revelation. God only knows, and God only can tell, whether he will forgive, and upon what terms he will forgive the offences done against him ; what mode of worship he requires ; what helps he will afford us, and what condition he will place us in hereafter. All this God actually has told us in the gospel. It was to tell us this he sent his Son into the world.

The Christian should mark the worldly man's discretion in ordering the equipment of his house and gardens. If he sees any article of convenience and luxury within the reach of his means, he is glad to transfer it to his quarters. If he meets with good fruit, he is desirous to get a graft of the tree to enrich his garden. How much more should the believer labour to improve his estate ! When he sees any solid attainments of grace, any lovely fruits of righteousness which he is not possessed of, how anxiously should he seek to transplant them into his soul !

There is a story, how divers ancient fathers came to St. Anthony, inquiring of him what virtue did by a direct line lead to perfection, that so a man might shun the snares of

Satan. He bade every one of them speak his opinion ; one said, watching and sobriety ; another said, fasting and discipline ; a third said, humble prayer ; a fourth said, poverty and obedience ; and another, piety and works of mercy : but when every one had told his mind, his answer was, that all these were excellent graces indeed, but discretion was the chief of them all. And so without all doubt it is, being the very guide of all virtuous and religious actions, the moderator and orderer of all the affections ; for whatsoever is done with it, is virtue, and whatsoever without, vice ; an ounce of discretion is said to be worth a pound of learning : as zeal without knowledge is blind, so knowledge without discretion is lame, like a sword in a madman's hand, able to do much, apt to do nothing. He that will fast must fast with discretion ; he must so mortify that he do not kill his flesh ; he that giveth alms to the poor must do it with discretion, to every one that asketh ; but not every thing that he doth ask : so likewise pray with discretion, observing place and time ; place, lest he be reputed a hypocrite ; time, lest he be accounted a heretic : and thus it is, that discretion is to be made the guide of all religious performances.—SPENCER.

A father that had three sons was desirous to try their discretion, which he did by giving to each of them an apple that had some part of it rotten. The first eats up his apple, rotten and all ; the second throws all his away, because some part of it was rotten ; but the third picks out the rotten, and eats that which was good, so that he appeared the wisest : thus, some in these days, for want of discretion, swallow down all that is presented, rotten and sound altogether ; others throw away all truth, because everything delivered unto them is not truth, but surely they are the wisest and most discreet, that know how to try the spirits whether they be of God or not—how to choose the good and refuse the evil.—IBID.

Repentance.

There is a story of a devout man, who had, amongst many other virtues, the gift of healing, unto whom divers made

resort for cure : amongst the rest, one Chromatius, being sick, sent for him ; being come, he told him of his sickness, and desired that he might have the benefit of cure as others had before him. I cannot do it, (said the holy man,) till thou hast beaten all the idols and images in thy house to pieces. O that shall be done, said Chromatius ; here, take my keys, and where you find any images, let them be defaced ; which was done accordingly. To prayer went the holy man, but no cure was done. O (saith he) I am as sick as ever, very weak and sick. It cannot be otherwise, (replied the holy man,) nor can I help it; there is one idol yet in your house undiscovered, and that must be defaced too. True, (says Chromatius,) it is so indeed, it is all of beaten gold, it cost 200*l.* ; I would fain have saved it ; but here, take my keys again, you shall find it fast locked up in my chest ; break it all to pieces. Which being done, the holy man prayed, and Chromatius was healed. Thus ends the story, but here begins the moral of it. The case is ours ; we are all of us, by nature, spiritually sick, full of wounds and putrefied sores ; the spiritual physician tells us, that if we look for any amendment, it must be by the amendment of our lives : he prescribes repentance of our sins ; that we are willing to do in part, but not in whole ; we would fain keep one Delilah, one darling beloved sin, but it must not be, there must not be one sin unrepented of, we must repent as well for our Achans as our Absaloms ; our Rimmons, as our Mammons ; our Davids, as our Goliahs ; our covert, as well as our open sins ; our loved, as our loathed lusts ; our heart abominations as well as loathed scandal ; our babe-iniquities, as well as giant provocations : our repentance must be universal.—SPENCER.

Anselm, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury, whom the church of Rome hath inserted into the canon of saints, (but he ranketh himself among the Apocrypha of sinners,) recounting with heart's grief and sorrow the whole course of his life, and finding the infancy of sin in the sins of his infancy, the youth and growth of sin in the sins of his growth, and the maturity and ripeness of all sin in the sins of his ripe and perfect age, breaketh forth into this passionate speech—"What remains for thee, wretched man, but that

thou spend the remainder of thy life in bewailing thy whole life?" And thus must we do, considering that even when we pray against sin, we sin in praying; when we have made holy vows against sin, our vows by the breach of them turn into sin; and upon repentance of sins many there are that repent of their repentance, and so increase their sin; hence it is, that St. Jerome, in his epistle to Leta, calleth for a continual lent of discipline, that her whole life should be a life of repentance.—IBID.

A good husband will repair his house while the weather is fair, not put it off till winter; a careful pilot will take advantage of wind and tide, and so put out to sea, not stay till a storm arise. The traveller will take his time in his journey, and mind his pace when the night comes on, lest darkness overtake him; the smith will strike while the iron is hot, lest it grow cool, and so he lose his labour; so we ought to make every day the day of our repentance; to make use of the present time, that when we come to die, we may have nothing to do but to die, for there will be a time when there will be no place for repentance, when time will be no more; when the door will be shut, when there will be no entrance at all.—IBID.

I came, says Nehemiah, to Jerusalem, and understood of the evil that Eliashib had done for Tobiah, in preparing for him a chamber in the courts of the house of God, and it grieved me sore; but he rests not there, but goes further; therefore I cast forth all the household stuff of Tobiah out of the chamber. What should Tobiah do with a chamber there? therefore he not only outs Tobiah, but out goes all his stuff too. Thus doth repentance, when it considers all the evil that Satan and corruption have done, that they have taken chambers in the heart that should be the house of God, it is grieved sore, and therefore it outs Satan and all his stuff: neither he nor any of his retinue shall be lodged there any longer, nor any one sin shall find the least entertainment.—IBID.

We see in religion the same state of things which we see in the human body. There are sore diseases beyond remedy; there is another class which will yield to timely remedies, but they have this conformity with the former, that they will be-

come incurable if neglected, and not brought under the power of medicine ; and that which at first was not a serious evil, through apathy and indolence becomes a mortal disease. And is there no disorder to which the soul is subjected which is past all hope of cure ? If there is "an accepted time, a day of salvation" *now*, there is also a day predicted when "we shall call, and the Lord will not hear." There is a day of grace, and there is a day when its last sands have run out, and a reprobate mind pronounces that it is "impossible to renew them again to repentance." There are also many sins which, taken in time, will yield to the heavenly physician ; but if we harden our hearts and grieve the Holy Spirit, and stifle the voice of grace, will go on from worse to worse, and assume a fatal character before we are aware of it, and dreaming on in fancied security.

Every sinner that repents causes joy to the Saviour ; this new cup of joy is so full that it runs over, and wets the fair brow of cherubim and seraphim, and all the angels have a part of that banquet.

The bent of the mind towards God, on repentance succeeding transgression, shows more evidently than ever the fixed character of the Christian ; as the needle in the compass, when shaken, again turns to the pole ; and as the running stream appears to flow clearer than before, when that which polluted it is removed.

Resurrection.

You tremble, perhaps, at the thought of laying aside your weak, sinful, mortal body. But you will receive it again ; not such as it now is, frail, defiled, and perishable ; but bright with the glory, and perfect in the image of God. The body is that to the soul, which a garment is to the body. When you betake yourself to repose at night, you lay aside your clothes until morning, and resume them when you rise. What is the grave but the believer's wardrobe, of which God

keeps the door? In the resurrection morning, the door will be thrown open, and the glorified soul shall descend from heaven to put on a glorified robe, which was indeed folded up and laid away in dishonour, but shall be taken out from the repository enriched and beautified with all the ornaments of nature and of grace.

There are countenances in the world, which, when united with fine forms and composed of superior features, when animated with intelligence and moulded by peculiar virtue into the clear and strong expression of worth and loveliness, fascinate the eye and engross the heart. What, then, must be the appearance of that aspect, which is wrought into harmony, beauty, and dignity, by the most exquisite workmanship of God, inspired with the intelligence of heaven, and lighted with the beams of angelic excellence; around which virtue plays with immortal radiance, while joy illumines the eye with living splendour, and glory surrounds the head with its crown of stars. In this manner will be arrayed, in this manner adorned, a "multitude which no man can number, of all nations, kindreds, and tongues." How magnificent, how sublime, how enrapturing must be the prospect of those glorified beings, surrounding, after the judgment is terminated, the Lord of all things, and rising in his train, as a cloud of splendour, to the mansions of eternal joy!

I have stood in a smith's forge, and seen him put a rusty, cold, dull piece of iron into the fire, and after a while he hath taken the same piece, the very same numerical individual piece of iron out of the fire, hot, bright, sparkling; and thus it is with our bodies—they are laid down in the grave, dead, heavy, earthly; but at the resurrection "this mortal shall put on immortality;" at that general conflagration, this dead, heavy, earthly body shall arise, living, light-some, glorious; which made Job so confident, "I know that my Redeemer liveth, &c.; and though after my skin worms destroy my body, yet in my flesh shall I see God." Job xix. 25, 26.—SPENCER.

Rewards.

A spouse that is considering with herself whether she should marry such a husband or not, beginneth to consider what she should be without him, and what she shall have with him; she considers him, perhaps, as one that will pay her debts and make her honourable, &c., and yet it may be she considers not the man all this while; however, these considerations are good preparations to draw her on to give entertainment to him, but after some converse and acquaintance with the person, she comes to like the man himself so well, that she is content to have him, though she have nothing with him, and the match is made up betwixt them, out of true and sincere love and liking. Thus it is, that the proposal of rewards and punishments are, as it were, a beginning, a Prodromus, a good introduction to the full sight and fruition of God, when it is that men begin at first to consider their own misery most, and that if they should apply themselves to other things as remedies, they would be still to seek; for there is a vanity in all things; and if to themselves, that they cannot help themselves in time of trouble, therefore they judge that they must go to Almighty God, who is able to do more than all, and to rid them out of misery; and they consider that going to him they shall have heaven besides. Yet all this while they consider not the Lord's power; however, this consideration makes way, that God and they may meet and speak together; it brings their hearts to give way, that the Lord may come to them; it causeth them to attend to him, to look upon him, to converse with him, to admit him as a suitor, and to be acquainted with him: and whilst they are thus conversing with him, God reveals himself; and then being come to the knowledge of him in himself, they love him for himself, are willing to seek his presence, to seek him for a husband, though all other things were removed from him; and now the match is made up, and not till now; and then they so look upon him, that if all other advantages were

taken away, they would yet still love him, and not leave him for all the world's enjoyments.—SPENCER.

When Ahasuerus read in the book of the records of the Chronicles, and there found how Mordecai had discovered a plot of treason against his person, he did not lay the book aside, and slightly pass by such a piece of service, but inquires what honour, and what dignity had been done to Mordecai; it seems, if the king had thought on, or read of him sooner, he had rewarded him sooner. But God hath ever in his eye all the records and chronicles of his people's actions; he reads their journals every day, and where he meets with any that have done or spoken anything aright for him, he inquireth what honour, what dignity hath been done for this man? If none hath been done, he will do it himself; if anything hath been done, he will do yet more; not a sigh, not a tear, not a thought, for the glory of Christ shall fall unregarded, unrewarded.—IBID.

Riches.

He that goeth a far journey, returneth his money usually by a bill of exchange, and carrieth not his money along with him, only so much as will defray the charges of his journey, and all this for fear of robbing: so the children of God, they lay out their money to the poor, they take God's bill of exchange for it, and then it meets them in the world to come, and there they do not only receive it, but it receives them into everlasting habitations.—SPENCER.

It is a great deal of care and pain that the spider takes in weaving her web: she runneth much and often up and down, she fetcheth a compass this way and that way, and returneth often to the same point; she spendeth herself in multitudes of fine threads to make herself a round cabinet; she exenterateth herself, and worketh out her own bowels, to make an artificial and curious piece of work; which,

when it is made, is apt to be blown away with every puff of wind : she hangeth it up aloft, she fasteneth it to the roof of the house, she strengtheneth with many a thread, wheeling often round about, not sparing her own bowels, but spending them willingly upon her work ; and when she hath done all this, spun her fine threads, weaved them one within another, wrought herself a fine canopy, hanged it aloft, and thinks all sure, on a sudden, in the twinkling of an eye, with a little sweep of a besom, all falls to the ground, and so her labour perisheth. But here is not all ; poor spider, she is killed either in her own web, or else she is taken in her own snare, haled to death, and trodden under foot : thus the silly animal may be truly said either to weave her own winding sheet, or to make a snare to hang herself. Just so do many men waste and consume themselves to get preferment, to enjoy pleasures, to heap up riches and increase them ; and to that end they spend all their wit, and oftentimes the health of their bodies, running up and down ; labouring, and carking, and caring ; and when they have done all this, they have but weaved the spider's web to catch flies ; yea, oftentimes are caught in their own acts, are made instruments of their own destruction : they take a great deal of pains with little success, to no end or purpose.—*IBID.*

Look but upon a fly coming to a platter full of sweet and pleasant honey ; if she thrust not herself altogether into it, but only touch and taste it with her mouth, and take no more than is necessary and needful, she may safely take wing, and fly to another place : but if she wallow and tumble in the honey, then is she limed, and taken in it ; and whilst she is not able to fly away, she doth there lose her life. Thus, if a man take only so much of his riches as may sustain and honestly maintain his estate, bestowing the rest well, and in a christian manner, then they cannot hold him back, or bar him from the kingdom of heaven ; but if covetousness shall bewitch him, and prick him on to scrape and rake together more and more, then he shall never be satisfied, but fall into many “ snares and temptations, which drown men's souls in destruction and perdition.”—*IBID.*

Possessions and riches of this world are like a rose in a

man's hand ; if he use it gently, it will preserve its savour and its scent and colour a great while ; but if he crush it, and handle it roughly, it loseth both its colour and its sweetness. Thus, if a rich man use and employ his wealth well, he will possess it the longer ; but if he set his heart too much upon it, he will quickly lose it ; he may possess it, but by no means must he let his wealth possess him ; if riches increase, he must not set his heart upon them. Hence was that saying of the heathen, I may lend myself, but I will not give myself to my wealth ; and so must all of us do, if ever we intend to become true possessors of worldly riches and endowments.—IBID.

When Dionysius, the Syracusan tyrant, saw what heaps of gold and silver his son had hoarded up in his closet, he asked him what he meant to let it lie there, and not to make friends of it to get the kingdom after his decease. Son (says he) thou hast not a spirit capable of a kingdom. And thus we may safely conclude, wheresoever we see a wealthy rich man piling up his bags, and purchasing the whole country about him, and yet perceive no works of charity or piety in him, that he is no heavenly-minded man, and justly say of him, he hath not a soul capable of the kingdom of heaven.—IBID.

Æsop hath a fable of the two frogs, that in the time of drought, when the plashes were dry, consulted what was to be done ; one advised to go down into a deep well, because it was likely the water would not fail there ; the other answered, but if it do fail, how shall we get up again ? Thus riches are a pit, whereinto we soon slip, but can hardly scramble out ; small puddles, light gains, will not serve some ; they must plunge into deep wells, excessive profits ; but they do not consider how they shall get out again ; they do not mind the great dangers that are attendant upon riches, whereby it comes to pass that they are either famished for want of grace, or drowned in a deluge of wealth : if, then, this world be a sea, over which we must swim to the land of promise, there will be no necessity of such abundance of luggage, except it be to make us sink the deeper.—IBID.

Righteousness—self.

Sir James Thornhill was the person who painted the inside of the cupola of St. Paul's, London. After having finished one of the compartments, he stepped back gradually to see how it would look at a distance. He receded so far, (still keeping his eye intently fixed on the painting,) that he was got almost to the very edge of the scaffolding without perceiving it: had he continued to retreat, half a minute more would have completed his destruction, and he must have fallen to the pavement underneath. A person present, who saw the danger the great artist was in, had the happy presence of mind to suddenly snatch up one of the brushes, and spoil his painting by rubbing it over. Sir James, transported with rage, sprang forward to save the remainder of the piece. But his rage was soon turned into thanks, when the person told him, "Sir, by spoiling the painting I have saved the life of the painter. You was advanced to the extremity of the scaffold without knowing it. Had I called out to you to apprise you of your danger, you would naturally have turned to look behind you, and the surprise of finding yourself in such a dreadful situation would have made you fall indeed. I had, therefore, no other method of retrieving you but by acting as I did." Similar, if I may so speak, is the method of God's dealing with his people. We are all naturally fond of our own legal performances. We admire them to our ruin, unless the Holy Spirit retrieve us from our folly. This he does by marring, as it were, our best works; by showing us their insufficiency to justify us before God. When we are truly taught of him, we thank him for his grace, instead of being angry at having our idols defaced. The only way by which we are saved from everlasting destruction, is by being made to see that "by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified."

A young man was recommended to Diogenes for a pupil; and his friends, thinking to give Diogenes a good impression concerning his intended disciple, were very lavish in his

praises. "Is it so?" answered the old philosopher; "if the youth is so well accomplished to my hands, and his great qualities are already so numerous, he has no need of my tuition; even keep him to yourselves." As little are self-righteous people fit for Christ.

The presence of the solar beams constitutes daylight; and stars, which, during our recess from the sun, spangled the sable canopy of night, and glittered to the view of gazing nations, not only cease to dazzle, but even forbear to twinkle, and become quite invisible, when the monarch of the sky regilds our hemisphere with his gladdening smile. The superior lustre absorbs the inferior; and those shining drops which so lately attracted our admiration, are lost, absolutely lost, in one vast magnificent ocean of light. Such is the fate of human righteousness, when Christ, in his fulness of mediatorial beauty and grandeur, rises on the soul of a benighted sinner. In our pharisaical and unconverted state, (a state of tenfold deeper than Egyptian darkness,) our good works, as we are apt flatteringly to style them, charm us with their petty, evanid radiance—

"As stars, from absent suns, have leave to shine." But no sooner is Jesus, by the internal agency of his Spirit, revealed in our hearts, and his completely finished obedience discovered to the eye of faith, than we cease going about to establish our own righteousness. Self-excellence, and self-dependence vanish in that blessed moment; and the language of the soul is, "Thy merits, O thou Redeemer of the lost, are all my salvation; and an interest in thee is all my desire."

Our own righteousness and endeavours must first make the scale of eternal life preponderate in our favour, and then the merits of Christ are thrown in to make up good weight. The Messiah's obedience and sufferings stand, it seems, for mere ciphers, until our own free will shall prefix the initial figure, and render them of value. I tremble at the consequences of a system, which (as one well observes) considers the whole mediation of Christ as no more than a pedestal on which human worth may stand exalted, nay (to use the language of another) which "sinks the Son of God—how shall I speak it?—into a spiritual huckster, who, having

purchased certain blessings of his Father, sells them out afterwards to men upon terms and conditions."

It is equally sad and astonishing to observe the ingredients of that foundation on which self-justiciaries build their hopes of heaven. First, there is a stratum of free-will, then of good dispositions, then of legal performances; next, a layer of what they term divine aids and assistances, ratified and made effectual by human compliances; then a little of Christ's merits; then faithfulness to helps received; and, to finish the motley mixture, a perseverance of their own building. At so much pains is a Pharisee in going about to establish his own righteousness, rather than embrace the bible way of salvation, by submitting to the righteousness of God the Son.

Self-righteous people are like a man who has run up a very slight house for his own residence; in which, while he sits or sleeps securely, a sudden storm arises, and blows down the whole fabric, and buries the builder in ruins. God will either bring us out of our self-righteous castle, or crush us with its fall.

Suppose one man owes another a thousand pounds, but he is unwilling to pay the debt, and denies that he owes it. His creditor, being a very compassionate man, says to him, "I do not wish for your money, and as soon as you will own the debt to be a just one, I will release you from your obligations; but I cannot do it before, for that would be, in fact, acknowledging that I am in the wrong." The poor man refuses to confess that he owes the money, and is, in consequence, sent to prison. After remaining there for a time, he sends his creditor word that he will allow he owes him *a hundred pounds*. But that will not do. After another interval, he says that he will allow that he owes *two hundred pounds*; and thus he keeps gradually giving up a little more, until he gets to *nine hundred*; there he stops a long while. At length finding there is no other way of escape, he acknowledges the *whole* debt, and is released. Still it would be free unmerited kindness in the creditor, and the poor man would have no right to say, "I partly deserved it,

because I owned the debt ;” for he ought to have done that, whether he was liberated or not. Just in this manner we have treated God. When he comes and charges us with having broken his law, we deny it ; we will allow, perhaps, that we deserve a slight punishment, but not all which God has threatened. But if we are ever to be saved, God comes, and, as it were, shuts us up in prison ; that is, he awakens our consciences, and sends his Spirit to convince us of sin. Thus we every day see more and more of the desperate wickedness of our hearts, until we are ready to allow that we have deserved eternal condemnation. As soon as we acknowledge this, God is ready to pardon us ; but it is evident that we do not thereby *deserve* pardon ; that he is not under the least obligation to bestow it ; and that all who are saved, are saved through free unmerited grace.

The great sculptor Phidias was employed by the Athenians to make a statue of one of their goddesses, Diana ; and he succeeded so well as to produce a chef d’œuvre. The artist became enamoured of his own creation of genius ; and anxious that his glory should go down to posterity, he secretly engraved his name in one of the folds of the drapery of this beautiful figure. The Athenians discovered it, and, with a zeal worthy a nobler object, they indignantly banished the daring mortal who had thus polluted the sanctity of the goddess with this earthly stain. And O with what eyes of flaming indignation, and utter abhorrence must the Father behold that self-righteous mortal who would venture to add the patches of his own “filthy rags” of righteousness to the pure, spotless, and perfect robe of Christ’s righteousness!

Salvation.

The freer the gospel, the more sanctifying is the gospel ; and the more it is received as a doctrine of grace, the more will it be felt as a doctrine according to godliness. This is one of the secrets of the christian life, that the more a man

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holds of God as a pensioner, the greater is the payment of service that he renders back again. On the tenure of "Do this and live," a spirit of fearfulness is sure to enter; and the jealousies of a legal bargain chase away all confidence from the intercourse between God and man; and the creature striving to be square and even with his Creator, is, in fact, pursuing all the while his own selfishness, instead of God's glory. It is only when, as in the gospel, acceptance is bestowed as a present, without money, and without price, that the security which man feels in God is placed beyond the reach of disturbance; or that he can repose in him, as one friend reposes in another; or that any liberal and generous understanding can be established between them—the one party rejoicing over the other to do him good—the other finding that the truest gladness of his heart lies in the impulse of gratitude; by which it is awakened to the charms of a new moral existence.

Some are all their days laying the foundation, and are never able to build upon it to any comfort to themselves, or usefulness to others; and the reason is, because they will be mixing with the foundation stones that are only fit for the following building. They will bring their obedience, duties, mortification of sin, and the like, unto the foundation. These are precious stones to build with, but unmeet to be first laid, to bear upon them the whole weight of the building. The foundation is to be laid in mere grace, mercy, pardon in the blood of Christ. This the soul is to accept of, and to rest in, merely as it is grace, without the consideration of anything in itself but that it is obnoxious to ruin. This it finds a difficulty in, and would gladly have something of its own to mix with it. It cannot tell how to fix these foundation stones without some cement of its own endeavours and duty; and because these things will not mix, they spend a fruitless labour about it all their days. But if the foundation be of grace, it is not at all of works; otherwise grace is no more grace. If anything of our own be mixed with grace in this matter, it utterly destroys the nature of grace, which, if it be not alone, is not at all.

Because we deny salvation by our own works, many charge

us with being enemies to good works. But am I an enemy to a nobleman, because I will not attribute to him those honours which are due only to the king? If I say to a common soldier in an army, you cannot lead that army against the enemy, will he therefore say, Then I may begone; there is no need of me? Or, if I see a man at his day labour, and say to him, You will never be able to purchase an estate of £10,000 per annum by working in that manner, will he therefore give over his work, and say he is discouraged?

There is a story of one that, falling asleep, dreamt that he was in a large field, hedged in on all sides with thunder and lightning, hail storms, and the like tempestuous weather, and then he saw certain houses afar off, and, making towards one of them, craved admittance till the storm were over. What art thou, said the master of the house; I am such a one, says he, telling him his name; and I, says the master, am called Justice; thou must not look for any comfort in me, but rather the contrary: at another house he was answered that there dwelt Truth, one that he never loved, and must therefore expect no shelter there: well, he goes to the third, the house of Peace, and there he finds the like entertainment. In the midst of this distraction, he lights upon the house of Mercy, and there he humbly desiring entrance was made welcome and refreshed. This may be but a dream, imaginary; yet the application is a real truth. Thus the poor man, rejected everywhere, at last finds refuge in the sign of the Cross. When the habitations of Justice, Truth, and Peace are bolted fast upon the drooping soul, then are the gates of mercy wide open to receive it, there being no salvation but by the mercies of God in Christ Jesus.—SPENCER.

Satan.

Satan will seldom come to a Christian with a gross temptation: a green log and a candle may be safely left together; but bring a few shavings, then some small sticks, and then larger, and you may soon bring the green log to ashes.

When the saint is beset with some great affliction, this is as some blind or solitary lane, fit for this thief to call for his purse in. An expert captain first labours to make a breach in the wall, and then falls on in storming the city. Satan first got power from God to weaken Job in his estate, children, health, and other comforts he had, and now tempts him to impatience, and what not. He lets Christ fast forty days before he comes, and then he falls to work : as an army stays till a castle be pinched for provision within, and then sends a parley never more likely to be embraced than in such a strait. A temptation comes strong when the way to relief seems to lie through the sin that Satan is wooing to. When one is poor, and Satan comes—"What! wilt thou starve, rather than step over the hedge, and steal for thy supply?"—this is enough to put flesh and blood to the stand.

After great manifestation of God's love, then the tempter comes. Such is the weak constitution of grace, that it can neither well bear smiles nor frowns from God without a snare ; if God smile and open himself a little familiar to us, then we are prone to grow high and wanton ; if he frown, then we sink as much in our faith : thus the one, like fair weather and warm gleams, bring up the weeds of corruption ; and the other, like sharp frosts, nip, and even kill the flowers of grace. The Christian is in danger on both sides.

When he comes to tempt he is modest, and asks but little : he knows he may get that at many times which he should be denied if he asked all at once. A few are let into a city, when an army coming in a body would be shut out ; and, therefore, that he may beget no suspicion, he presents, may be, a few general propositions, which do not discover the depth of this plot ; these, like scouts, go before, while his whole body is hid, as it were, in some swamp at hand. Many have yielded to go a mile with Satan that never intended to go two ; but when once on the way have been allured further and further, till at last they know not how to leave his company. Thus Satan leads poor creatures down into

the depths of sin by winding stairs, that let them not see the bottom whither they are going. First he presents an object that occasions some thoughts, these set fire on the affections, and these fume up into the brain and cloud the understanding, which being thus disabled, now Satan dares a little more declare himself, and boldly solicit the creature to that it would even now have defied. Many who at this day lie in open profaneness, never thought they should have rolled so far from their profession ; but Satan beguiled them, poor souls, with their modest beginnings. O Christians, give no place to Satan, no, not an inch, in his first motions ; he that is a beggar, and a modest one without doors, will command the house if let in : yield at first, and thou givest away thy strength to resist him in the rest ; when the hem is worn, the whole garment will ravel out, if it be not mended by timely repentance.

One way wherein Satan shows his subtilty in managing his temptations, is in his reserve. A wise captain hath ever some fresh troops at hand to fall in at a finish when the others are worsted. Satan is seldom at a loss in this respect ; when one temptation is beat back, he soon hath another to fill up the gap, and make good the line. Thus he tempts Christ to diffidence and distrust by bidding him turn stones into bread, as if it were time now to carve for himself, being so long neglected of his Father as to fast forty days, and no supplies heard of : no sooner had Christ quenched this dart with that, "It is written man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God," but he had another on the string tempting him to presumption : "Then the devil taketh, and sets him on a pinnacle," and bids, "Cast thyself down headlong, for it is written, He shall give his angels charge over thee," &c. : yet note we Satan's temptations in Christ were like the serpent's motion on a rock ; (of which Solomon speaks,) that makes no impression, no dent at all. Prov. xxx. 19. But on us they are as a serpent on sand or dust, that leaves a print when not in the heart, yet in the fancy colours that which is next door to it, and so the object then is ready to slip in, if great care

be not observed ; especially when he doth thus change his hand, as, when we have resisted one way, fall on afresh another, yea, plant his succeeding temptation upon our very resistance in the former. Now it requires some readiness in our postures, and skill at all our weapons, to make our defence ; like a disputant, when he is put out of his road, and hath a new question started, or an argument unusual brought, now he is tried to purpose. And truly this is Satan's way when he tempts the Christian to neglect of duty in God's worship, (from his worldly occasions, the multitude of them, or necessity of following them,) and this takes not, then he is on the other side, and is drawing the Christian to the neglect of his worldly calling, out of a seeming zeal to promote his other in the worship of God. Or first he comes and labours to deaden the heart in duty ; but the Christian, too watchful of him there, then he is puffing of him up with an opinion of his enlargement in it, and ever he keeps his slyest and most sublimated temptations for the last.

Theameleon, when he lies on the grass to catch flies and grasshoppers, taketh upon him the colour of the grass ; as the polypus doth the colour of the rock under which he lurketh, that the fish may come near him boldly, without any suspicion of danger. In like manner, Satan turneth himself into that shape which we least fear, and sets before us such objects of temptation as are most agreeable to our natures, that so he may the sooner draw us into his net. He sails with every wind, and bows us that way which we incline of ourselves through the weakness of nature. Is our knowledge in matter of faith deficient ? He tempts us to error. Is our conscience tender ? He tempts us to scrupulosity, and too much preciseness. Hath our conscience, like the ecliptic line, some latitude ? He tempts us to carnal liberty. Are we bold spirited ?—to presumption. Are we timorous and distrustful ?—to desperation. Are we of a flexible disposition ?—he tempteth us to inconstancy.—Stiff ?—he labours to make obstinate heretics, schismatics, or rebels of us. Of an austere temper ? he tempteth us to cruelty. Are we soft and mild ?—to indulgence and foolish

pity. Are we hot in matters of religion?—he tempteth us to blind zeal and superstition. Cold?—he tempteth us to Laodicean lukewarmness. Thus doth he lay his traps in our way, that one way or other he may ensnare us.—SPENCER.

If you observe a fowler plying his art, you will see him well equipped with the instruments of deception. He not only spreads his net, but he has his glittering pieces, his decoy bird and his whistle, whilst he himself is on the watch. The poor lark, if she come within sight and hearing, is soon allured with one or other of his snares, to descend and quit her native sky. And now entangled in his net she becomes the prey of the fowler. And so Satan, that arch deceiver of souls, has his glittering baits and deceptions. The world is his field, and there he spreads his temptations. He has his glasses to magnify the objects on which the worldling sets his heart, and his decoy birds to tempt others into his nets. Now if God had not told the believer, if his eyes were not open, and he had not wings to fly away, it were another matter. But O fool! when thou hast a nature which prompts thee to soar aloft where thy safety lies, to live so much below, and get thine affections entangled in Satan's nets.

It is reported by the poets of Achilles, the Grecian captain, that his mother being warned by the oracle, dipped him, being a child, in the river Lethe, to prevent any danger that might ensue by reason of the Trojan war; but Paris, his inveterate enemy, understanding also by the oracle that he was impenetrable all over his body except the heel, or small of his leg, which his mother held by when she dipped him, took his advantage, shot him in the heel and killed him: thus every man is, or ought to be, armed with that panoplia, the whole armour of God, for Satan will be sure to hit the least part that he finds unarmed; if it be the eye, he will dart in at that casement by the presentation of one lewd object or another; if it be the ear, he will force that door open by bad counsel; if the tongue, that shall be made a world of mischief; if the feet, they shall be "swift to shed blood." —SPENCER.

Scriptures.

It is never to be supposed that the divine pattern of the scriptures should direct every word and every phrase by an extraordinary, immediate inspiration, for then it were impossible there should have been a diversity of style, but all the parts must have been in one and the same style. But there was that influx of the divine Spirit that did most certainly guide the writers as to all the substance of what was to be written and recorded by them ; which did attemper itself to the natural genius of those that were made use of as the penmen, so that the communication of the Holy Ghost, perceived by such and such men, of such and such a constitution, temper, and genius, comes to be diversified in that manner, as if one comes to pour a quantity of water into such and such a particular vessel ; if the vessel be round, the water falls into a round figure ; if the vessel be square, the water is formed into that figure unavoidably. And so the same communication of the Holy Ghost being poured into such a vessel as this or that man was, comes to be accordingly diversified. That very communication to such a one as Isaiah, for instance, receives one sort of figure there, and a communication to such a one as Micah receives another figure there ; when yet all these communications are from one and the same fountain, and serve for one and the same common purpose.

Though the Scriptures were dictated by the Holy Spirit, and hold the lamp to knowledge and happiness, how many cast the precious charter behind their backs, or even trample it under their feet ! “Though,” as one expresses it, “God himself has vouchsafed to commence author, how few will so much as give his work the reading !” The renowned Scipio Africanus hardly ever had Xenophon’s writings out of his hand. Alexander the Great made Homer’s poems his constant companion. St. Chrysostom was so fond of Aristophanes’ comedies, that he even laid them under his pillow when he slept. Our matchless Alfred constantly carried Boéthius de Consol. Phil. in a fold of his robe.

Tamerlane (if I rightly remember) always carried about with him the History of Cyrus. Bishop Jewel could recite all Horace, and Bishop Sanderson all Tully's Offices. The Italians are said to be such admirers of Tasso, that the very peasants sing him by heart as they pursue their country labours. The famous Leibnitz could repeat, even in extreme old age, the greatest part of Virgil; and one of the popes is said to have learned English, purely for the sake of reading the Spectator in its original language. How warmly does Horace recommend the study of the Greek writers to the Roman youth! *Nocturnâ versate manu, versate diurnâ.* How, then, ought Christians to study the Book of God? Beza, at upwards of eighty years of age, could repeat the whole of St. Paul's Epistles in the original Greek, and all the Psalms in Hebrew; and even more lately, the learned Witsius, at a very advanced period of life, could recite almost any passage of scripture in its proper Hebrew or Greek, together with the contexts and criticisms of the best commentators. How will such persons rise in judgment against the negligent professors, the many superficial divines, and the flimsy infidels of the present day! Time has been, when the word of the Lord was precious in this land, so precious that in the reign of Henry VIII. an honest farmer once gave a cart-load of hay for one leaf of St. James's Epistle in English. Now, indeed, through the goodness of God, the manna of his word lies in abundance round our tents. But what is the consequence? Most of us are for reading any book, except that which can make us wise to salvation. We disrelish even the bread of life: I almost said we spurn it away with our feet. Hence our spiritual declensions. May we not address the generality of Christians, so called, in the words of Mr. Boston? "The dust on one hand, or the finery on the other, about your Bibles, is a witness now, and will at the last day be a witness, of the enmity of your hearts against Christ as a prophet."

A certain Jew had formed a design to poison Luther, but was happily disappointed by a faithful friend, who sent Luther a picture of the man, with a warning to take heed of such a person when he saw him. By this Luther knew

the murderer, and escaped his hands. Thus the work of God, O Christian, shows thee the face of those lusts which Satan employs to destroy thy comforts, and poison thy soul. "Hereby," saith David, "is thy servant warned." Psalm xix. 11.

To unconverted persons, a great part of the Bible resembles a letter written in cipher. The blessed Spirit's office is, to act as God's decipherer, by letting his people into the secret of celestial experience, as the key and clue to those sweet mysteries of grace, which were before, as a garden shut up, or as a fountain sealed, or as a book written in an unknown character.

Scripture can be savingly understood, only in and by the inward illumination of the Holy Ghost. The Gospel is a picture of God's free grace to sinners. Were we in a room hung with the finest paintings, and adorned with the most exquisite statues, we could not see one of them, if all light was excluded. Now, the blessed Spirit's irradiation is the same to the mind that outward light is to the bodily eyes.

The difference between the Holy Scriptures and other writings is much the same as that between the works of art and nature. The works of art appear to most advantage at first, but will not bear a nice and repeated examination; the more curiously we pry into them, the less we shall admire them. But the works of nature will bear a thousand views and reviews, and yet still be instructive and still wonderful. In like manner the writings of mere men, though never so excellent in their kind, yet strike and surprise us most upon our first perusal of them; and then flatten upon our taste by degrees, as our familiarity with them increases. Whereas the word of Revelation is, like its Author, of an endless and unsearchable perfection, and the more reason still shall we find to admire and adore the wisdom of the great Revealer of it.

The celebrated John Locke has a remark to this effect: the understanding, like the eye, while it discovers all other things, does not see itself; and it requires art and pains to set it at a distance, and make it become its own object. By looking, however, into a mirror, the curious and useful eye

is represented to itself; and by attentively gazing at the word of God, the mind may become acquainted with its own character, and behold its true portrait. And as the true use of a mirror is to represent those parts which cannot otherwise be seen, and to enable a person to correct and adjust whatever may require correction or adjustment; just so the word of God is intended to expose us to ourselves, and to enable us to make those improvements which are necessary. With too many, alas! the discoveries which this word makes are unattended to, and all its impressions forgotten. With others, however, the views it affords, and the directions it bestows, are carefully preserved and diligently followed.

When a man is drawing water out of a well (it is Epiphanius' observation) with two vessels of a different metal, the water at first seemeth to be of a different colour; but when he draweth up the vessels nearer to him, the diversity of colours vanish, and the water appeareth to be one and the same colour; and when he tasteth them, they have one and the same relish. Thus, although at the first sight there may seem to be some contradictions in the Scriptures, yet when we look nearer and nearer into them, and compare one place with another, we shall find no contrariety in them, no repugnancy at all, but a perfect harmony and full consent of one place with another. As the faith of the patriarchs relating to the promises made to Abraham before the law; the prophets grounding themselves upon Moses under the law; and the faith of the church relying upon the doctrine of the apostles under the Gospel, all of them agreeing in one—nothing at all contradictory.—SPENCER.

It is reported of a great person, that being desirous to see the sword wherewith Scanderbeg had done so great exploits, when he saw it, replied, "he saw no such great matter in the sword more than any other sword." "It is truth, (quoth one standing by,) you see the sword, but not the arm that wieldeth it." So, when we look upon the Scriptures, the bare word, whether printed in our Bibles, or audible in the pulpit, we shall find no such business in it more than in

other writings ; but when we consider the arm of God's power, that joins with it, when we look upon the operation of his holy Spirit working therein, then we shall change our thoughts, and say as Jacob did of Bethel, "Surely, of a certain, God is in this word."—IBID.

There is no study which so fully repays the student. Like one who, having been famished with the husks and berries of a wilderness, is strengthened and invigorated by healthy and nutritious food—such is the bread of life to one who has hitherto kept aloof from it. How doth it quicken and deepen his faculties, cheer his despondency, confirm his irresolution, assuage his fretfulness, disperse his perplexity, and relieve the toils and infirmities of life ! What a healthy freshness of mind is infused by the regenerating influence of the Gospel ! The mind, set to work by so pure a spirit, rises aloft, and drops at every rise some fettering incumbrance, while it straightway pursues its object, as the dove let loose into the sky immediately plunges towards the quarter of its home.

The hearts of believers are carried out to desire the word of communion with God from *instinct*, and not from any outward inducement. The cause of the natural appetite is not persuasion and discourse, but inclination ; not argument, but nature. Appetite is an effect of life. As new-born babes desire the milk, not by instruction but instinct, without a teacher ; as all creatures desire to preserve that life which they have, and therefore run by a natural propension to the teats of their dams ; as trees that receive life from the earth and sun stretch out their branches to receive the sun, and strike deep their roots into the earth which brought them forth ; and as the chicken is no sooner out of the shell, but it shrouds itself under the feathers of the hen ; and the little lamb runs to its dam though there may be a thousand sheep of the same wool and colour, as if it said, here I received what I have, and here I'll seek what I want—so by such a native, inbred desire do the saints run to God's word, and seek a supply of strength and nourishment ; and the desire is very strong and vehement—"One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after," &c. What is the

reason of this? You may as well ask what teacheth the young lambs to suck, and what teacheth the chicken to run under the wing of the hen, as who taught the regenerate to long for the word. It is the instinct of a spiritual nature. And it shows that all who do not "desire the sincere milk of the word," and have no such kindly appetite for the ordinances, who can relish nothing but meats and drinks, business, wealth, vanities—they were never acquainted with the new nature.

As many locks, whose wards differ, are opened with equal care by one master-key, so there is a certain comprehensive view of scriptural truth which opens hard places, solves objections, and happily reconciles, illustrates, and harmonises many texts, which to those who have not this master-key, frequently styled "the analogy of faith," appear little less than contradictory to each other. When we obtain this key, we shall be sure to obtain the right sense.—LEIFCHILD.

The waters of the sanctuary (Ezek. xlvii.) flowed from the temple, and formed a river that none could ford. There are in the Scriptures those gentle streams in which we may walk with delight; there are others which are deep waters for purification, and for sanctification; but there are also others too deep for the most exalted understanding, being far beyond the reach of human comprehension.

The Mahommedans write on the cover of the Koran, "Let no unclean person touch it." How much more respect should we have to the Bible, the true word of God!

The Scriptures are ever fresh. Each time the dew of heaven descends upon the same soil, it imparts to it a new freshness and fertility. So undiscovered beauties spring up at every fresh reading of the word of God, which arrest attention and command the deepest interest. The Scriptures, like the ocean, remain essentially the same, while the light never plays upon its surface without varying its hues; but the dull mind of man loves earth too well to contemplate its beauties in that spirit of enjoyment which imparts to the bosom of a believer such pure and rapturous delight.

Our sentence is already passed by the law. "The word

that I have spoken, the same shall judge you in the last day." A man that is to be examined and tried for life and death, would fain know how it would speed with him, and how matters shall be carried beforehand. God will not deal with you by way of surprise; he hath plainly told you according to what rule he will proceed. The sentence on our state, be it a good or evil one, is already passed. See John iii. 18. Rom. viii. 1.

A single prohibition is so planted by God in the Scriptures, that, like a piece of ordnance, it may be said to enfilate and sweep a whole territory of sin; nothing can come within its range without challenging its thunder, and courting death. A single rule is said to contain laws for an indefinite number of actions; for all the possible cases of the class described which can ever occur. Like the few imaginary circles by which geography circumscribes the earth, he has by a few sentences described, and distributed into sections the whole globe of duty; so that wherever we may be on it, we find ourselves encompassed by some comprehensive maxims; and in whatever direction we may move, we have only to reflect, in order to perceive that we are receding from, or approaching to, some line of morality.—HARRIS.

Where men are unskilful in the word, particular difficulties, either entangle them, and fill them with perplexities, so that they know not what to do, but are like the traveller who knows not what path to take; or else, like undisciplined soldiers, they violently and presumptuously break through them to the wounding of their consciences, and the hardening of their spirits against a sense of sin.

Hypocrites may delight in the speculation, but a child of God is delighted in the obedience and in conformity to his word. "I have rejoiced in the way of his testimonies as much as in all riches," not only in the testimonies themselves—in the naked contemplation of these blessed truths, but in the way and practice of these things. He that loves his rule will study an exact conformity thereto. The love of a child of God to the word differs from that of a temporary believer in this way. A mere beholder of a rare piece of painting may be greatly pleased with it, and if he

has a taste for the arts, his pleasure and satisfaction will be sensibly increased. But this is nothing to the enjoyment which an artist will find in it. What is it to the zest and delight which he takes in imitating, and copying it out, in expressing it, when he can by his own pencil copy it out to the life? So while the one contents himself with barren admiration and naked praise and acknowledgment, the true believer finds his delight when he can copy out the word of God, and transcribe it as the moral image of his God into his heart.

The sacred writers have this peculiarity, that they proportion and accommodate themselves to the wants of every one; a lamb may ford them, without fear, to quench his thirst; and an elephant may swim there, and find no bottom to their depths.

You have only to think what a change would pass on the aspect of our race, if the Bible were suddenly withdrawn, and all remembrance of it swept away, and you arrive at some faint notion of the worth of this volume. Take from Christendom the Bible, and you have taken the moral chart by which alone its population can be guided. Ignorant of the nature of God, and only guessing at their own immortality, the tens of thousands would be as mariners tossed on a wide ocean, without a pole-star, and without a compass. The blue lights of the storm fiend would burn ever in the shrouds; and when the tornado of death rushed across the waters, there would be heard nothing but the shriek of the terrified, and the groan of the despairing. It were to mantle the earth with more than Egyptian darkness; it were to dry up the fountains of human happiness; it were to take the tide from the waters, and leave them stagnant; and the stars from our heavens, and leave them in sackcloth; and the verdure from our valleys, and leave them in barrenness; it were to make the present all recklessness, and the future all hopelessness; the maniac's revelry, and then the fiend's imprisonment,—if you could annihilate that precious volume which tells of God and of Christ, and unveils immortality, and in-

structs to duty, and woos to glory. Such is the Bible. Prize ye it, and study it more and more.

Surely, if men had the spirit of the apostle, or of those blessed angels which desire to pry into the gospel of Christ, they would not mispend so much precious time in petty and fruitless studies, nor waste away that lamp of reason in their bosom in empty and unnourishing blazes; but would set more hours apart to look into the patent of their salvation, (which is the book of God,) and to acquaint themselves with Christ beforehand, that when they come into his presence, they might have the entertainment of friends, and not of strangers. Men that intend to travel into foreign kingdoms with any advantage to their parts, or improvement of their experience, do, beforehand, season and prepare themselves with the language, with some topographical observations of the country, with some general notions of the manners, forms, civilities, governments of the natives there; do delight to converse with those men who are best learned in these or like particulars. Surely, we all profess a journey to heaven, a pilgrimage in this present world, to have our conversation now, where we look to have our everlasting abode with the Lord hereafter. Now in the gospel of Christ we have, as it were, a map, a topographical delineation of those glorious mansions which are there prepared for the church; we have some rudiments of the heavenly language; in one word, we have abundantly enough, not only to prepare us for it, but to inflame all the desires of our soul unto it, even as exiles and captives desire to return to their native country. Now, then, if we no way regard to study it, or acquaint ourselves with it; if we seem to desire the sight of Christ in heaven,—and when we may, every day, have a blessed view of his face in the glass of his Gospel, we turn away our eyes and regard it not; we do as good as proclaim to all the world, that either our hopes of heaven are very slender, or our care thereof little or none at all.

Scripture truths, when they do not enrich the memory, yet they may purify the heart. We must not measure the benefit we receive from the word according to what of it

remains, but according to what effect it leaves behind. Lightning, you know, than which nothing sooner vanishes away, yet it often melts and breaks the hardest and most firm bodies in its sudden passage. Such is the irresistible force of the word; the Spirit often darts it through us; it seems but like a flash and gone, and yet it may melt and break down our hard hearts before it, when it leaves little impression upon our memories.

Too much reading, and too little meditation, may produce the effect of a lamp inverted, which is extinguished by the very excess of that aliment whose property it is to feed it.
—THE PORTFOLIO.

Though man has reason, and is capable of understanding the sense and importance of the words that describe the mysteries of godliness, yea, and the matter too, yet he gets not the savoury knowledge of them by his natural abilities. There is a grammatical knowledge, and a spiritual knowledge; a man may know things grammatically and literally, that is ignorant of them spiritually; as a child may read the lessons and words, yet does not conceive the sense of the passage. So a man may know what is written concerning God and Christ, and sin and grace, the vanity of the creature, and the blessedness of holiness, and have no saving knowledge of these things. Let a man and a child look upon the face of a watch. Both may be equally able to read the numbers of the figures exposed on the dial-plate, and see the movement of the minute and second hands; but there is a further knowledge which is comprehended in these things, and to be gathered from inspection. The precise hour of the day may be read by the one who is instructed to understand the construction of the various parts of the watch, and the object of their adjustment—but the child regards only the figures of the hands without any association of ideas. It is so with the spiritual and the natural man, engaged on the word of God. To the one it is the hidden wisdom of God made known in a mystery—to the other, it is written, “hearing they shall hear and shall not understand, seeing they shall see and not perceive.”

G G

The Bible resembles an extensive and highly cultivated garden, where there is vast variety and profusion of fruits and flowers; some of which are more essential, or more splendid than others; but there is not an herb suffered to grow in it which has not its use and beauty in the system.

Self.

There is a strong resemblance between a pert, overbearing, conceited opinionist, and a drunken man. You may see him reeling to and fro; now entertaining this odd conceit, to-morrow that, and the next day a third; unstable in all. Vomiting too, and casting out scornful reproaches against such as differ from him. Talkative as drunkards commonly are; prating, and obtruding his own opinions on every body. Self-sufficient, and boasting himself and his party as too hard for all their opposers. Thus, as our proverb saith, "one drunkard is forty men strong." Whoever attempts to reason with such a dogmatist, will soon find him as incapable of conviction as Nabal was of Abigail's narration, until his wine was gone out of him.—SPENCER.

How pleasant, when we have learned to forsake and abandon ourselves, when we are not apt to magnify and applaud, to trust or love, to seek and serve ourselves unduly; when that idol, self, is no longer maintained within us at the dear expense of our peace, comfort, safety, and eternal hope; an idol that engrossed the whole substance of our souls, that exhausted and devoured the strength and vigour of our spirits, which it doth not maintain, and cannot repair; which consumes our time, which keeps all our powers and faculties in a continual exercise and hurry, to make a costly, a vain, an unlawful provision for it! How great is the ease and pleasure which we feel in being delivered from that soul-wasting monster, that was fed and sustained at a dearer rate, and with more costly sacrifices and repasts than can be

paralleled by either sacred or other history ; that hath made more desolation in the souls of man than ever was made in their towns and cities, where idols were served by only human sacrifices, or monstrous creatures satiated with such refectious; or where the lives and safety of the most were to be bought out by the constant successive tribute of the blood of not a few ;—that hath devoured more, and preyed more cruelly upon human lives, than Moloch or the Minotaur ! When this monstrous idol is destroyed and trodden down, what a jubilee doth it make, what songs of triumph and praise doth it furnish and supply to the poor soul, now delivered and redeemed from death and bondage !

Every person has some object which he loves supremely ; and in every unrenewed man that object is *self*. Suppose, for illustration, that you have an image, which is in reality extremely ugly, but which you think beautiful, and you spend all your time in polishing and adorning it. Notwithstanding all your efforts, it grows more and more ugly, till at last, in despair of amending it yourself, you pray that God would make it more lovely. It is evident in this case that your prayers would not proceed from love to God, but from love to your idol ; and therefore there would be no goodness in them. Suppose that during all this time a person was entreating you to look at a beautiful, diamond statue, which you refused to do, until wearied with useless efforts to make your image appear more beautiful, you turn and look at the statue. Immediately you see your idol in all its native deformity, you cast it aside, and begin to admire and extol the statue. This idol represents *self* ; and every unrenewed person admires and loves it supremely. When his conscience is awakened to see something of his sinfulness, he first endeavours to make himself better, and it is long before he finds that he cannot change his own heart. When he finds that, notwithstanding all his endeavours, his heart seems to grow worse and worse, he prays to God for help. It is not from love to God, because God has commanded it that he prays ; but because he is unwilling to see himself so sinful ; so that his prayers merely arise from pride and selfishness. But if he will only turn, and look to

Christ, he sees his sin in a new light, and no longer loves himself supremely; all his affections are transferred to Christ. He then prays to be made better, not to gratify his pride, but because he sees something of the beauty of holiness, and longs to resemble his divine Master.

Sincerity.

An attention to one part will not prove our sincerity. It is an ancient song, you must keep minim time, or else you will put the whole choir out of tune, so look that you sing the new song of the Lord with trembling and accurate observation—miss neither cliff nor note, neither sound doctrine nor pious practice. Christ and his truth will not divide; and his truth hath not latitude and breadth, that ye may take some of it, and leave some of it; nay, the gospel is like a small hair that hath no breadth, and will not cleave in two; it is not possible to twist and compound a matter betwixt Christ and Antichrist; and therefore, ye must either be for Christ, or ye must be against him. You must give him an absolute obedience, or it is just nothing.

If a person was to attend the levee of an earthly prince every court-day, and pay his obeisance punctually and respectfully, but at other times speak and act in opposition to his sovereign, the king would justly deem such a one an hypocrite and an enemy. Nor will a solemn and stated attendance on the means of grace in the house of God prove us to be God's children and friends,—if we confine our religion to the church walls, and do not devote our lips and lives to the glory of that Saviour we profess to love.

Hast thou but one love how thou mayest love Christ, and be beloved of him? If the streams of thy affections be thus, by the mighty power of God renewing thee, gathered into this one channel, and with a sweet violence run this way, then blessed art thou of the Lord; thou art the sincere soul in his account, though much corruption be found in thee still, that is soiling thy stream, and endeavouring to stop the free course of thy soul Godwards. This may put thee

to some trouble, as the mountains and rocks do the river-water running to the sea, causing some windings and turnings in its course, which else would go the nearest way, even in a direct line to it; so thy remaining corruptions may now and then put thee out of the way of obedience; but sincerity will like the water on its journey for all this, and never leave till it bring thee, though with some compass, to thy God, whom thou hast so imprinted in thy heart, as he can never be forgotten by thee.

The girdle is used as an ornament put on uppermost, to cover the joints of the armour which would, if seen, cause some uncomeliness. Hence, (at the loins I mean,) those pieces of armour for the defence of the lower parts of the body are fastened to the upper: now because they cannot be so closely knit and clasped, but there will be some little gaping between piece and piece, therefore they need to put over these parts a broad girdle that covered all the uncomeliness. Now sincerity doth the same for the Christian what the girdle doth for the soldier. The saint's graces are not so close, nor his life so exact, but in the best there are found infirmities and defects, and clefts in his armour; but sincerity covers them all, that he is not exposed to danger by them.

Spirituality.

We know that animal life and activity depend altogether on a communication of vital air, but we are not equally conscious that spiritual life in its existence, and all its actings, depends on our communication with the Spirit of God, by whose influence the regenerate spirit lives, and moves, and has its being.

A child can have no co-operation in its own conception, but when born into the world it becomes instinctively [and actively employed in promoting its own growth. It affects maturity. Thus is it with the new-born soul; Ps. xvii. 15; Phil. iii. 12—14. It presses onwards for an increasing spirituality.

Mr. Owen says, if a man of a carnal mind is brought into a large company, he will have much to do; if into a company of Christians, he will feel little interest; if into a smaller company engaged in religious exercises, he will feel still less; but if taken into a closet and forced to meditate on God and eternity, this will be insupportable.

A religion, indeed, that shall be of my own forming and contrivance, I can easily make myself accord to; but why should I ever hope that this should serve my turn, or do the work? or why should I think, against plain experience and my Bible, that the most excellent part of religion should be within the compass of my own power to effect and produce? Let us think how it is with us in other cases. It is, you know, within the compass of human power to shape a statue, or paint in colours the picture of a man; but when the artist has done all this, can he infuse a soul into the statue, or make that picture fit to reason and discourse? No; when he has done his utmost, it will be only a mere piece of ingenious contrivance, that looks specious to the eye, but has in itself nothing of sense, life, or motion; can do nothing like what it imitates, for still something within will be necessary. So, in like manner, I can externally shape myself like a Christian; but can I infuse the divine life into this external form? can I make myself to live, choose and delight, love and joy in God as a Christian?

If a plot of ground should be laid out for a garden, square it never so accurately, let it have never so exact a figure, bestow upon it everything of ornament that art can invent, yet if nature also do not do its part, if the sun never shine upon it, if no showers or dews ever descend, would it be, think you, a pleasant flourishing garden? We have all of us reason to have done expecting much from lifeless outward forms; even the best constitution imaginable, while a spirit of life from above breathes not, despair that that will ever work miracles, or do any great things amongst us.

The very difference between a carnal and a spiritual life is this. The carnal man doth see only the carcass of the world, and is blind to God, and seeth not him, when he seeth that which is animated by him. But the spiritual

man seeth God in and by the creature, and the creature is nothing to him but in God. As an illiterate man doth look upon a book, and seeth only the letters, and taketh pleasure in their shape and order, and falls a playing with it as children do; but he seeth not, nor understands the sense; and therefore if it contained the most noble mysteries of the greatest promises, even such as his life did depend upon, he loveth it not in any such respect: nor doth he for that delight in it. But let a learned man have a perusing of the same book, and though he may commend the clearness of the character, yet it is the sense that he principally observeth, and the sense that he loveth, and the sense that he delighteth in; and therefore, as the sense is incomparably more excellent than the character simply considered, so it is a higher and more excellent kind of knowledge and delight which he hath in the book, than that which the illiterate hath. And therefore, as the illiterate cannot see the sense of words and letters, the wood for trees, so the literate can see no such thing as words without sense, nor would regard the materials but for this signifying use.

A spiritual man is like an instrument in tune, which needs only to be touched to send forth most sweet music; but a carnal man is like one that needs a great deal of preparation to set it a going. So an organ, or any other wind instrument, maketh no music till there be breath put into it; but a stringed instrument, as the lute or viol, yieldeth a pleasant sound even with the touch of a finger: and thus a carnal man that is dead in sin and trespasses, must have a new life breathed into him by the blessed Spirit of God, before he be able to set forth the praises of his Maker; whereas one that is spiritualised, one that is furnished with the graces of the Spirit doth good, and receiveth good, upon the least touch of the Spirit; is a trumpet of God's glory upon the least occasion that can possibly be offered.—SPENCER.

The disappointment a godly, sincere person meets with from any other quarter than his religion, when grace is in exercise, troubles him no more than it would a merchant who speeds in the main end of his voyage to the Indies, and returns richly laden with the prize of silver and gold which

he went for, but only lost some trifling article in the voyage. As the master's eye directs the hand, if the servant can do his business to his master's mind, he has his wish, though strangers who come into the shop like it not. Thus godly sincerity acquiesces in his Lord's judgment of him. Such a one shoots not at small nor great, studies not to accommodate himself to any, to hit the humour of rich or poor, but singles out God in his thoughts from all other; as the chief object of his fear, love, faith, joy, &c., he directs all his endeavours like a wise archer at this white, and when he can most approve himself to God, he counts he shoots best. Hear holy Paul speaking not only in his own private thoughts, but the common sense of all sincere believers, 2 Cor. v. 9, "We labour, whether present or absent, that we may be accepted of him."

If upon inquiry thou findest that thy armour decays rather for want of scouring, than by any blow from sin presumptuously committed, as that is most common and ordinary, rust will soon spoil the best armour, and negligence gives grace its bane, as well as gross sins, then apply thyself to the use of those means which God hath appointed for the strengthening grace: if the fire goes out by taking off the wood, what may preserve it but by laying it on again? David tells us where he renewed his spiritual life, and got his soul so often in a heavenly heat; when grace in him began to chill: "Thy word (he says) quickeneth me."

Among the wonders which science has achieved, it has succeeded in bringing things which are invisible, and impalpable to our senses, within the reach of our most accurate observations. Thus the barometer makes us acquainted with the actual state of the atmosphere. It takes cognizance of the slightest variation, and every change is pointed out by its elevation or depression, so that we are accurately acquainted with the actual state of the air, and at any given time. In like manner the Christian has within him an index by which he may take cognizance, and by which he may measure the elevation and degrees of his spirituality—it is the spirit of inward devotion. However difficult it may seem to be to pronounce on the invisibilities of our spirituality, yet

there is a barometer to determine the elevation or depression of the spiritual principle. It marks the changes of the soul in its aspect towards God. As the spirit of prayer mounts up, there is true spiritual elevation, and as it is restrained, and falls low, there is a depression of the spiritual principle within us. As is the spirit of devotion and communion with God, such is the man.

Christ's church is "fair as the moon, and clear as the sun." The sun is perfectly luminous, but the moon is but half enlightened; so the believer is perfectly justified, but sanctified only in part. His one-half, his flesh, is dark; and as the partial illumination is the reason of so many changes in the moon, to the which the sun is not subject at all; so the imperfection of a Christian's holiness is the cause of so many waxings and wanings, and of the great inequality in his performances; whereas, in the mean while, his justification remains constantly like itself. *This is imparted: that is inherent.*

Think how precious and excellent a life is to be maintained in man; that spiritual divine life, a thing which doth require and justify their utmost care, requires it; for what would a person think of it, if he should be intrusted with the life of a prince, the child of a great monarch? If any of us had such a charge committed to us—"I charge you with the life of this child, and to use your best care, and endeavour for the nourishment of its life, and for the cultivating of it, and fitting it to the best purposes whereof it may be capable." How would this engage one's utmost diligence,—that it is a very important life committed to my care. We have every one of us this care incumbent upon us of the life of a divine thing produced and brought forth in us, and which we are to apply the name, first, to, when we call ourselves the sons or children of God. There the name falls first: it is that divine thing that is his Son, and we are only his sons, or children, on account of that. To have a divine life, to maintain and cherish in my soul, as I may have a subordinate agency under the Spirit in order thereto, how should it engage my utmost solicitude and care, that nothing be done offensive to this life, that everything be

done that may tend to preserve, and improve its spirituality!

Some indulge in melancholy reflections of a past and better state than they enjoy now. They laud the golden days of their espousals, the blessedness which they knew when first they "tasted that the Lord was gracious;" and thus they stand like superannuated old men, who have left the fairest periods of their life behind them, and having no definite hopes for the future, only begin occasionally to warm a little when the past presents itself to their minds, and sends some sunny rays into their present wintry existence. How different St. Paul! he saw the fairest days of his spiritual life *before* him, not lying behind him; all the past was but a foretaste of a more elevated spirituality.

Where there is life, real, spiritual life, there is also progress in that life. A plant which makes no shoots or growth, is dead or sickly. Even the tree which has reached its full height does not remain as it is, but constantly renews and varies its outward appearance. Thus it is with the kingdom of nature, and so it is with the kingdom of grace. "Be ye therefore renewed in the spirit of your minds." "Though our outward man perish, yet our inward man is renewed day by day."

In the very nature of things a carnal mind is death, and a spiritual mind life. The spiritually minded man is represented as "alive unto God." This is a frequent method in Scripture of representing the case, and a just and proper one, for as the bent is to spiritual things, so far the soul is alive in the truest and noblest sense. Life capacitates for action and enjoyment, death disables for both. What is the life of the body, but a capacity to exercise the powers and functions which belong to it? We esteem human life in this world most perfect in that period which we call the state of manhood, in opposition to infancy and childhood on the one hand, and to enfeebled age on the other; because at maturity it is more capable of the actions becoming the reasonable capacities than in tender years, and more fit to enjoy the delights and satisfactions which are suitable to our nature, than in the decline of life, when indeed we

rather sigh and groan, than live. What then is the life of the soul, but, as in the case of the body, a capacity to exercise the powers and functions which belong to it? But the spiritual mind can alone enable the soul for the proper acts of a spiritual life. Hence it is "life," while the carnal mind is "death," because it is opposite to, and incapacitates the soul for action. And that is the more perfect life of the soul which is suited for the most exalted actings and enjoyments, when the spiritual mind rising out of weakness is most active and vigorous in its service of God.

Spirit—Holy.

If the husbandman is attentive to the vicissitudes of weather, and the face of the sky, that he might be prepared to take the full benefit of every gleam of sunshine, and every falling shower—how much more alert and attentive should we be in watching for those influences from above, which are necessary to ripen and mature a more precious crop! As the natural consequence of being long under the guidance of another is a quick perception of his meaning, so that we can anticipate his wishes, something of this ready discernment, accompanied with instant compliance, may reasonably be expected from those who profess to be habitually led by the Spirit.

When the rays of the sun fall on the surface of a material object, part of those rays are absorbed; part of them are reflected back, in straight lines; and part of them refracted this way and that, in various directions. When the Holy Ghost shines upon our souls, part of the grace he inspires is absorbed to our own particular comfort; part of it reflected back in acts of love, and joy, and prayer, and praise; and part of it refracted every way, in acts of benevolence, beneficence, and all moral and social duty.

The word of God will not avail to salvation without the Spirit of God. A compass is of no use to a mariner, unless he has light to see it by.

An house uninhabited soon comes to ruin ; and a soul uninhabited by the Holy Spirit of God, verges faster and faster to destruction.

It is not like the Spirit will advance to the filling of the soul with his presence, so long as lust remains in heart and strength in men ; for this is to be remembered, that though there be a contrariety in all the lusts of the flesh unto the Spirit, yet all kinds or degrees of these lustings are not so, or upon such terms, repugnant and contrary to the Spirit, and his growth in men, but that this may proceed and go forward, some of them notwithstanding. For as it is in the comings in of the tide, and flowings of the waters, whilst the waters are increasing, and the banks filling, there are some smaller refluxes or fallings back of the water, which are presently recovered, and this with advantage, by the next reflux and bearing up of the tide, so that the tide holdeth on its way, maketh good its course, until it cometh to its height and fulness, these lesser refluxes notwithstanding : in like manner, though there be at times some lesser yieldings and givings back of the Spirit in the soul, meeting with the current or stream of the flesh, yet he may be brought in again, *toties quoties*, and that with power, to the overbearing and breaking the motions and current of the flesh, and so keep still upon the advance, and be filling of his channels and banks daily.

You know, that great inundations, as they gradually spread in circuit, so they increase and grow more copious by a continued accession of new rivulets and springs to them wherever they spread ; so it is in such a work as this of the Spirit of God. That Almighty Spirit, the further it goes, the more it engages and takes in the concurrence of the spirits of men, as so many rivulets into the great and common inundation. For the expression of “pouring forth the Spirit” seems to favour that metaphor, and to look towards it ; as the communications of the Spirit are frequently in Scripture spoken of under the same metaphor of “streams of water,” “rivers of water.” So it is also in a common conflagration,—the workings of the Spirit are represented by

both these elements—the further the fire spreads, still the more matter it meets with, the more combustible matter, and, that way, still more and more increases itself, even intensively, according as it spreads more extensively, because it still meets with more fuel to feed upon. We might thus render this business very easy and familiar to our own thoughts, by considering such a communication of the Spirit, once begun and set on foot, doth spread and propagate itself, even in an ordinary and easy way and method, further and further.

The operation of the Spirit doth very much imitate that of nature ; it is in a very still and silent way that the sap is drained in by the root, and ascends up the trunk of the tree, and diffuses itself to every branch, so that we may see that it lives, but we do not see how. The case is with souls that are brought to live in the Spirit, as with very infirm and languishing persons who have been consumed, and even next to death, in a putrid and corrupt air ; being removed into such as is pure and wholesome they revive, but in a very insensible way ; so is this life preserved by a vital, spiritual influence, which is a pure air to them, a gentle, indulgent, benign, and cherishing air ; they live by it, and never a whit the worse because it is not so turbulent as to make a noise.

There may be a continual motion that is not progressive, like that of a door which continually moves on its hinges, yet never removes from its place ; but walking in the Spirit imports a progressive motion in a course of spirituality. When persons make still nearer and nearer approaches unto their end, the term of their course ; draw nearer and nearer to God ; and, as they draw nearer to him, find a gradual influence of divine light, and life, and power ; more discernible impressions of the Divine image ; grow more and more into suitableness to him ; are more acquainted with him, are brought into higher delectations, and to take more complacency in him ; this is walking in the Spirit ; when a man's path, as it is said concerning the righteous man, is as the shining light, that shines more and more, brighter and brighter, unto the perfect day. Prov. iv. 18.

As you know, the nearer approach we make unto the light of a glorious lucid object the more light we have, still, all along as we go, our way grows more and more lightsome. *They* do not walk in the Spirit, therefore, who keep moving but move in a circle, or in a round of empty, sapless duties, who keep up the formalities of religion, and no more; but *they* walk in the Spirit who make a progress, who go forward, who draw nearer and nearer unto God, and become more suitable to, and like him, and fit for his eternal converse, and for all the present service wherein he calls them.

The word of God is called the sword of the Spirit. It is the instrument by which the Spirit worketh. He does not tell us anything that is out of the record; but all that is within it he sends home with clearness and effect upon the mind. He does not make us wise above that which is written, but he makes us wise up to that which is written. When a telescope is directed to some distant landscape, it enables us to see what we could not otherwise have seen; but it does not enable us to see anything which has not a real existence in the prospect before us. It does not present to the eye any delusive imagery—neither is that a fanciful and fictitious scene which it throws open to our contemplation. The natural eye saw nothing but blue land stretching along the distant horizon. By the aid of the glass there bursts upon it a charming variety of fields, and woods, and spires, and villages. Yet who would say that the glass added one feature to this assemblage? It discovers nothing to us which is not there; nor out of that portion of the book of nature, which we are employed in cultivating, does it bring into view a single character which is not really and previously inscribed upon it. And so of the Spirit. He does not add a single truth or a single character to the book of revelation. He enables the spiritual man to see what the natural man cannot see; but the spectacle which he lays open is uniform and immutable. It is the word of God which is ever the same; and he whom the Spirit of God has enabled to look to the Bible with a clear and affecting discernment, sees no phantom passing before him; but, amid all the visionary extravagance with which he is charged, can,

for every one article of his faith, and every one duty of his practice, make his triumphant appeal to the law and to the testimony.—DR. CHALMERS.

I cannot give a more just idea of the new principle which the Spirit of God imparts to us in our conversion, than by comparing it with the modern invention of the compass. Before the invention of the compass, mariners in a dark night were unable with any precision to direct their course. Whilst they were in sight of land, or had a view of the sun or stars, they could proceed with some degree of certainty ; but, in the absence of these, they were altogether at a loss. But it is not so with mariners at this time. By the help of the compass, they can by night steer the ship as well as in the day ; having constantly at hand, as it were, a sure directory : now this is the difference between the natural and the spiritual man ; the natural man has reason and conscience, which, to a certain degree, are capable of directing his path. But numberless occasions arise whereon they fail him utterly. The spiritual man has superadded to these, a new and living principle abiding in him ; a principle infused in him by the Spirit of God, and in exact accordance with his mind and will : and by this principle the Spirit himself guides him in all his ways. The spiritual man, therefore, in every doubt or difficulty, should consult this divine principle within him ; and see its bearings, and follow its directions. And as the mariner, whilst he observes his compass, consults also his chart and maps ; so must he, whilst attending to the motions of this principle, consult also the directory which God has given us in the Holy Scriptures ; and by means of these observations we shall be kept from any great aberrations from the way of truth.

Look but upon a poor man, how solicitous he is, if it be but a bond of no great value, to keep the seal fair and whole ; but if another have one of a higher nature, as a patent under the broad seal, or the like, then to have his box, his leaves and wool, and all care is used that it take not the least hurt. And shall we then make slight reckoning of the Holy Ghost's seal, vouchsafing it not that care, do not so much for it as the one man for his bond, the other for his patent, the matter

being of such concernment? Let us then, being well and orderly sealed by the Spirit, be careful to keep the signature from defacing or bruising, nor to suffer the evil Spirit to set his mark, put his print with his image and superscription upon it; not to carry the seal so loosely as if we cared not what became of it: and whereas we are sealed to be close and fast, not to suffer every trifling occasion to break us up, not to have our souls to lie so open, as to subject ourselves to the many pollutions of the world.—SPENCER.

The return of the tide twice every day is owing to the attractive influence which the body of the moon exerts upon the earth, and especially upon its great moveable fluid the ocean. What a mysterious page of nature does this fact open, when we thus behold ourselves linked as it were by an invisible chain to a distant world! How forcibly should this remind us of our mysterious connexion with the invisible world of spirits, which is continually drawing us towards it, and holding us fast by a firm and everlasting bond! The tides do not more faithfully obey the influences of that planet, than our heart's affections flow out when acted upon by Christ's Spirit.

The Spirit of God is compared to springing, or living water, not water in a font, or vessel. Now water, besides its springing property, is also of a spreading nature; it has no bounds or limits to itself as firm and solid bodies have, but receives its restraint by the vessel, or continent, which holds it. So the Spirit of the Lord is not straitened in himself, but only by the narrow hearts of men into which it comes. "Ye are not straitened (says St. Paul) in us," i. e. in the ministry of the grace and dispensation of the Spirit.

Sin.

God counsels us of some great and notorious sin, (Acts i. 3, 6, 37; Acts ix. 4, 5; 1 Tim. i. 18,) and singles it out

as the grand evidence of the nature, and malignity of the heart. Thus a physician acts in respect to his patient. The disease lies deeply rooted in the constitution. He cannot have ocular demonstration that this is the case. But he finds one or more decisive symptoms which indicates the nature of the malady, and the danger to which it exposes the subject; on this evidence he proceeds to act, applying his remedy to the painful symptoms by adapting it to the primary disease from which they originate. David was thus instructed by his heavenly physician, "Behold I was shapen in iniquity." Though the symptoms of the spiritual disease cannot be forgotten by one who is under the process of a cure, yet the patient is taught to look to the primary disease. Herein is the difference between the real and fancied penitent. The latter may feel the *effects* of sin which dwelleth in him, but the former discerns the cause, and bewails it as St. Paul, Romans vii.

Conviction of sin denotes something beyond the common views of the mind concerning its sins; and is always a serious, solemn, heartfelt sense of their reality, greatness, guilt, and danger. This all sinners under the gospel have not; as every man knows who possesses a spirit of common observation; and peculiarly every man who becomes a subject of this conviction. Every such man knows that in his former ordinary state he had no such sense of sin. To explain this subject it is necessary to observe, that there is a total difference between merely seeing or understanding a subject, and feeling it. A man may contemplate, as a mere object of speculation and intellect, the downward progress of his own affairs towards bankruptcy and ruin, and have clear views of its nature and consequences, and still regard it as an object of mere speculation. Should he afterwards become a bankrupt, and thus be actually ruined, he will experience a state of mind entirely new, and altogether unlike anything which he experienced before. He now feels the subject; before he only thought on it with cool contemplation, and however clear his views were, they had no effect on his heart. His former views never moved

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him to due efforts for the prevention of his ruin; those which he now possesses would have engaged him, had they existed at the proper time for this purpose in the most vigorous exertions. Just such is the difference between the common views of sin, and those which are experienced under religious conviction. What before was only seen, is now realized and felt.

Such is its malignity, that when God was manifest in the flesh, and dwelt among us, nothing but his death would satisfy it. His blood called in Acts "blood of God," sin could shed with pleasure, with greater pleasure than any other—the blood of Barabbas had no sweetness in it compared with that of GOD OUR SAVIOUR.

Scarce any sin we act, but hath a nest of sins in it. Then think what a heap would they make, were they all put together. Are not our infirmities and little sins, like numberless grains of sand; and may not a weight of too much sand sink a ship as soon as a burden of too much iron?

It is with indwelling sin as with a river; while the springs and fountains of it are open, and waters are continually supplied unto its streams, set a dam before it, and it causeth it to rise and swell, until it bear down all, or overthrow the banks about it. Let these waters be abated, dried up in some good measure in the springs of them, and the remainder may be checked and restrained. But still as long as there is any running water it will constantly press upon what stands before it, according to its weight and strength, because it is its nature so to do. But if by any means it make a passage, it will proceed. So is it with indwelling sin; while the springs and fountains of it are open, in vain is it for men to set a dam before it by their convictions and resolutions, vows and promises. They may check it for awhile, but it will increase, rise high, and rage at one time or another, until it bears down all those convictions and resolutions, or makes itself an underground passage by some secret lust that shall give a full vent unto it. But now suppose the springs of it are much dried up by regenerating grace, the streams or actings of it abated by holiness; yet

whilst any remains of it, it will be pressing constantly to have vent, to press forward into actual operation. And this is its lusting.

The enlightened understanding beholds sin as a grand evil. It sets it forth as an apostasy in man—rebellion against God: as the spear and nails to Jesus Christ. As water quenching the spirit of grace—a blur and stain to the soul—the venom and essence of all evils—yea, a groaning burden on the back of the whole creation—and a thing of such monstrous deformities as, did it appear in its own proper shape, would not be touched, or looked on by man. Wherefore sin (that it may be welcome) covers itself with fig-leaves, as Adam; it veils its face, like Tamar; it paints and tires itself, like Jezebel; it disguises and feigns itself to be another, like Jeroboam's wife; it courts and flatters to steal away hearts, like Absalom; it comes like Agrippa and Bernice with great pomp; in fancy of some apparent goodness offering itself to our Saviour, it wrapped up itself in all the glories of the world; nay, in the mantle of love and angelical protection; coming to Adam it held forth an apple, and promised no less than a godhead—ever it hath lie and a cheat in it. This is that deceitfulness of sin mentioned in Heb. ii. 13. But the enlightened understanding hath a counter-work; it unveils sin; it unpaints and undresses it; it plucks off its false appearances and disguises; it disrobes it of all its pomps and fancy; it discovers the lie, and the cheat in it, and shows it up in its own ugly hue and shameful nakedness. Achan's sin was wrapt up in a Babylonish garment, but unclothe it, and it was an accursed thing: Saul's sin was covered over with sacrifices, but unveil it, and it was "witchcraft like rebellion;" Judas, his sin about the precious ointment was painted over with charity—but unpaint it, and 'twas arrant thieving. Paul's sin was a cloak of zeal, but undress it, and 'twas bloody persecution.

Though God, from love of his people in Christ, will save them from Tophet, yet will he punish their sins. How repeatedly did the sword descend on David's family, after the matter of Uriah! He sometimes punishes his people

more severely in this life than others. On Jonah's disobedience a storm pursues him; a whale devours him; while the profane world lived on without control in their lusts. Moses for one act of disobedience is excluded from Canaan when greater sinners enjoyed that happiness. A gardener hates a weed more for being in a bed with the most precious flowers; thus does God hate sin in them.

It is a sure sign that a man is awakened out of his sleep, when he discovers the errors of his dream. In the drawing up of water out of a deep well, so long as the bucket is under water, we feel not the weight of it; but as soon as it becomes above the water, it begins to hang heavy on the hand. When a man dives under water he feels no weight of the water, though there may be many tons of it above his head; whereas, a tub half full of the same water, taken out of the river, and set upon the same man's head, would be very burdensome to him, and soon make him grow weary of it. In like manner so long as a man is overhead in sin, he is not sensible of the weight of sin, it is not troublesome to him; but when he begins once to come out of that state of sin wherein he lay, and lived before, then beginneth sin to hang heavy upon him, and he groans under the weight thereof. So long as sin is in the will, the proper seat of sin, a man feels not the weight of it, but, like a fool, it is a sport and pastime to him to do evil. It is therefore a good sign that sin is removed out of its seat, out of its chair of state, when it becomes burdensome to us; and such a sense of sin may well be considered as an entrance into a state of grace.

During those exalted moments, when grace is in lively exercise; when the disciple of Christ experiences

“The soul's calm sunshine, and the heartfelt joy—”

corrupt nature, (that man of sin within,) and every vile affection, are stricken, as it were, with a temporary apoplexy; and the believer can no more, for the time being, commit wilful sin, than an angel of light would dip his wings in mud. No; it is when we come down from the mount, and mix again with the world, that, like Moses, we

are in danger of breaking the tables of the law. But is it not enthusiasm, to talk of holding intercourse with God, and of knowing ourselves to be objects of his special love? No more enthusiasm, (so we keep within scripture bounds,) than it is for a favourite child to converse with his parents, and to know that they have a particular affection for him. Neither in the strictest reason and nature of things, is it at all absurd to believe and expect that God can, and does, and will, communicate his favour to his people, and manifest himself to them, as he does not to the world at large. John xiv. 21, 22.

Men cannot cease from sin. We have a sad instance of this in St. Austin, before his entire and blessed conversion. He declares in his confessions how extremely hard it was to divorce himself from sensual delights; they were incarnated in his nature, ingrafted into his affections, and the separation from them was as the flaying him alive. When he prayed for chastity, it was with a restriction, make me chaste, but not too soon. In the vigour of his age, the sinning season, he was averse to be weaned from those poisonous breasts. Till divine grace changed his nature, he could never rescue himself from the entanglements of his iniquity.—SPENCER.

The fear of visible vengeance, that sometimes strikes the wicked, or the apprehension of judgment to come, may control the licentious appetites from breaking forth into actual commission of sins. But as when the lions spared Daniel, it was not from the change of their wild devouring nature, for they destroyed his accusers immediately, but from the suspending their hurtful power; so when a strong fear lays a restraint upon the active powers, yet inward lust is the same, and would licentiously commit sin, were the restraint taken away.

The outward forbearance of sin without inward purity can never commend us to the divine acceptance. A rebel may be driven from the frontiers, but so long as he keeps the royal city, he is unsubdued. So if a lust keeps possession of the heart, though the executive powers may be refrained or disabled from the outward acts, it still reigns.

There may be a forsaking of a particular sin that has

been delightful, and predominant without insincerity towards God, for another lust may have got possession of the heart, and take the throne. There is an alternate succession of appetites in the corrupt nature, according to the change of men's temper or interests in the world. As seeds sown in that order in a garden, that 'tis always full of a succession of fruits and herbs in season ; so original sin that is sown in our nature, is productive of divers lusts, some in the spring, others in the summer of our age, some in the autumn, others in the winter. Sensual lusts flourish in youth, but when mature age has cooled these desires, worldly lusts succeed ; in old age there is no relish for sensuality, but covetousness reigns imperiously. Now he that expels one sin, and entertains another, continues in a state of sin ; 'tis but exchanging one familiar for another ; or, to borrow the prophet's expression, " 'Tis as one should fly from a lion, and meet with a bear that will as certainly devour him."

An unrenewed person, while you please him, resembles the sea-coast at high water ; all the filth that lies beneath is concealed by the incumbent tide. But when the same person is tempted, or provoked, he is like the beach at low water ; and the rubbish and stones, and dead dogs, and cats, become visible presently.

An unsound and unrenewed heart may abstain from one sin, because it is contrary to, and inconsistent with, another sin. It is with the sins of our nature, as it is with the diseases of our bodies. Though all diseases are contrary to health ; yet some diseases, as the fever and palsy, are contrary to each other. So are prodigality and covetousness, hypocrisy and profaneness. These oppose each other, not for mutual destruction as sin and grace do, but for superiority, each contending for the throne, and sometimes taking it by turns. It is with such persons as with the possessed man, Matt. xvii. 15, whom the spirit cast sometimes into the fire, sometimes into the water. Or if one subdue the other, yet the heart is also subdued to the vassalage of that lust which is uppermost in the soul.

It is in the motions of a tempted soul to sin, as in the motions of a stone falling from the brow of a hill ; it is

easily stopped at first, but when once it is set a going, who shall stay it? And therefore, it is the greatest wisdom in the world to observe the first motions of the heart, to check and stop sin there. The motions of sin are weakest at first: a little care and watchfulness may prevent much mischief now, which the careless heart, not heeding, is presently brought within the power of temptation, as the Syrians were brought blindfold into the midst of Samaria before they knew where they were.

It is the truth and sincerity of your sorrow for sin at which God looks, not at the measure of it. If then you are really anxious to know whether you have been sufficiently humbled for sin, ask yourself, Are you so humbled for sin that you are willing to give it up? Are you so humbled for sin that you would not willingly again commit even the most favoured of your sins, if all the world were offered you? The refiner does not ask how long has the gold remained in the furnace; he asks, is the dross purged away?—is the baser metal burnt up? If it be so, then does he require nothing further to convince him that the gold has been sufficiently long in the crucible. So, if in mourning for sin; if your humbling yourselves for sin has, by God's grace, purged away your love for sin, be content on this point, although many of the children of God may have been far more deeply tried, and far more painfully humbled for it than yourselves.

The unregenerate man will sin willingly. Sin is born like the lively and vigorous offspring of a healthy parent, where there is no travail and labour in the birth, but where nature performs her operations with ease and freedom. But in the godly man the principle of grace will check sin in its first motions, till it miscarry, and prove an abortion; or else be like an untimely birth before maturity—weak and imperfect; it has not been born with the full consent of the will. The sin of the one is lively, like the Israelitish child, (Ex. i. 19,) the other, like the Egyptian's, requires a midwife to bring it into the world.

The deceptions of sin tend to harden the mind, by gradually, and almost imperceptibly influencing it till it becomes

quite accustomed to sin. The force of habit is astonishing. Surgeons and medical men, who are naturally humane and tender, by being accustomed to dissections, wounds, and amputation, necessarily lose in a great measure the sensibility of their minds to these things. On the same principle, soldiers after engaging in two or three battles, witness those things with little emotion. And so if you yield to the imposing insinuations of sin, and give way by a little and little, again and again, you will be so accustomed to them, that the cheat will seem to you a reality; all that sin says you will believe to be true; and by-and-bye you will indulge freely, and without remorse, in that at which you once felt shocked; and thus going on, you will become more and more hardened till you are beguiled into the commission of sin, of which, if it were proposed to you now, you would exclaim, "Is thy servant a dog, that he should do this thing?"

Sin should be immediately confessed to God. New breaches are made up sooner than long quarrels. Green wounds are healed easier than old sores. Spots are washed out better when newly gotten, than when engraved by long continuance.

Indwelling sin is the burden and trouble of believers, that they are not more holy, more zealous, useful and fruitful; they desire it above life itself; they know it is their duty to watch against this enemy, to fight against it, to pray against it, and so they do. And yet notwithstanding all this, such is the subtlety, and fraud, and violence, and urgency of this adversary, that it frequently prevails, grievously to restrain their growth in grace, and lead them into backsliding. Hence it is with believers, sometimes, as it is with men in some places at sea. They have a good and fair gale of wind, it may be all night long; they ply their tackling, attend diligently to their business, and it may be take great contentment to consider how they proceed in their voyage. In the morning, or after a season, coming to measure what way they have made, and what progress they have had, they find that they are much backward of what they were, instead of getting one step forward; falling into a swift tide or current against them, it hath frustrated all their labours,

and rendered the wind in their sails almost useless, somewhat thereby they have borne up against the stream, but have made no progress. So is it with believers ; they have a good gale of supplies of the Spirit from above, they attend duties diligently, pray constantly, hear attentively, and omit nothing that may carry them on their voyage towards eternity. But after a while, coming seriously to consider by the examination of their hearts and ways what progress they have made, they find that all their assistance and duties have not been able to bear them up against some strong tide or current of indwelling sin. It hath kept them, indeed, that they have not been driven and split on rocks and shelves ; it hath preserved them from gross, scandalous sins ; but yet they have lost in their spiritual frame, or gone backwards, and are entangled under many woful decays, which is a notable evidence of the life of sin.

The sin of man, being the lord of all creatures, must needs redound to the misery and mortality of all his retinue. For it was in the greater world, as in the administration of a private family ; the poverty of the master is felt in the bowels of the rest ; his stain and dishonour runs into all the members of that society. As it is in the natural body, some parts may be distempered and ill-affected alone ; others, not without contagion on the rest. A man may have a dim eye, or a withered arm, or a lame foot, or an impeded tongue, without any danger to the parts adjoining ; but a lethargy in the head, or an obstruction in the liver, or a dyspepsy and indisposition in the stomach, diffuseth universal malignity through the body, because these are sovereign and architectonical parts of man ; so likewise is it in the great body of the creation. However other creatures might have kept their evil, if any had been in them, within their own bounds, yet that evil which man, the lord and heart of the whole, brought into the world, was a spreading and infectious evil, which conveyed poison into the whole frame of nature, and planted the seed of universal dissolution, which shall one day deface with darkness and horror the beauty of that glorious frame which we now admire.

Why was sin suffered to enter the world, which has hurled

such confusion quite round the globe ; to finish which, cost God so dear as the blood of his own and only begotten Son ? Suppose a curious artist, who had made the finest and best vessel of glass that ever was made, should let it fall out of his hand, and break it all in pieces, with a design to show his greater skill in so setting the broken pieces together, as to make it more beautiful, and useful, and stronger than ever, even so strong as to be out of danger of being ever broke ; would any censure his conduct, or say he had acted a weak or unbecoming part in letting the glass he had made with so much care and art, fall so as to break ? Would not all commend the act, and admire his skill ? For though to melt glass is confessed by all to be a curious art, yet to be able so to set together broken pieces, as to render it proof against all accidents, the hammer not excepted, would be a far greater piece of skill. The application is easy and very instructing, though the simile falls short in this, that man broke and destroyed himself. “ O Israel, thou hast destroyed thyself ; but in me is thine help.” (Hosea xiii. 9.) For God to create so noble a creature as man, endowed (as he originally was) with such noble powers and vast capacities, was much ; but to new-form him, after sin had marred and broke him, as he shall undoubtedly be formed by Christ, both as to the body and soul, in the morning of the resurrection, is much more.—THE PULPIT.

A man that hath fed high for a long time comes to have a plethory of crude and undigested humours ; it so falls out, that this party riding afterwards in the wet, takes cold, and a fever ensues ; if the physician be a wise man, one that hath parts and skill, ask him, what was the cause of this sickness, and he will tell you the ill humours of the body, and the abounding of them ; yet it is like enough it had not turned to a fever so soon, if he had not took cold or been some way troubled in his journey. So when God brings punishment upon people, the proper cause is in every man's self ; there are personal sins in every man to make him obnoxious to the curse of God : yet may the sins of the father or parent, or neighbour, be the occasion that God will punish sin ; so that it may be said, that the personal sins of men are the pri-

mary, internal, antecedent, dispositive cause of God's judgments; but the sins of other men, as they are members of the whole, may be the external, irritating, exciting cause of God's judgments upon a people or nation.—SPENCER.

He that falleth into the midst of a deep river must labour and take more pains to get out, than he that hath fell in but at the brink thereof; the one must swim hard for it, whereas the other, catching hold upon the bank, or something else growing thereupon, more easily draweth himself out: thus, if we fall into great sins, it must and will cost us more sorrow and tears, than if we fell into lesser. Manasses' sin was great, and his sorrow was proportionable. Peter's sin was great, and his sorrow was suitable: so must ours be; if our sins be many and great, our sorrow must be so much the greater; if but few and little, our sorrow may be the less, and we sooner attain the peace of conscience.—IBID.

It is with the children of men, as with the housewife, that having diligently swept her house, and cast the dust out of doors, can see nothing amiss, not so much as a speck of dust in it; whereas, if the sun do but a little shine in, through some cranny in the wall, or some broken pane in the window, she may soon see the whole house swim, and swarm with innumerable moats of dust floating to and fro in the air, which for dimness of light or sight before she was not able to discover. Even so it is with many that are careful of their ways, so that little may be seen amiss that might require either reformation or amendment; yet when they shall come to look more attentively into God's law, a little beam of light, reflecting upon their souls from it, will discover unto them such an innumerable company, as well of corruptions in their hearts, as of errors and oversights in their lives, that it shall make them, as men amazed, cry out, Lord, what earthly man doth know the errors of his life!—IBID.

A traveller in his journey thinks of nothing so much as his journey's end; if he stumble by the way, that's against his will, and more than he intended; and if he chance to get a fall, or to go out of his way, he rests not till he be up and in

again. So look but upon a hunter, he hath no design to follow his way at all, whether in the way or out of the way, his mind is upon the game. An archer bends his bow, delivers his arrow, and though it fall short or over, on one side or other, his aim was at the mark: thus it is with the children of God; their souls are set upon holiness, their aim is at heaven, their thoughts upon Zion, their looks towards Jerusalem, and their face thitherward; and if there be any aberrations or turning aside, it is no more they, but sin that dwelleth in them: it is not so with the ungodly, they have no such design at God's glory, the desire of their hearts is the satisfaction of their lusts and sinful pleasures, they aim at nothing else but sin, and so in the end reap the wretched fruit of their own wicked ways.—IBID.

It is recorded of Mr. Ryland, who was condemned in 1783, that, from the time he absconded, until he was apprehended, he continually sat with a razor in a prayer-book. What a state of mind, to have just conviction and faith enough to pray, and yet to be so desperately wretched as to live with the instrument of self-murder continually in his hand! You shall see a man enlightened to know God's will, and in daily prayer. His conscience without ordinances would know no rest—yet, strange infatuation, he lives under the power of some wilful and presumptuous sin to which the sentence of eternal wrath is annexed—he clings to some besetting sin which cuts the throat of his sincerity, and grasps it, like the murderous weapon, to destroy his soul.

In the time of the law, the Nazarite was not only commanded to abstain from wine and strong drink, but he might not eat grapes, whether moist or dry, or anything that was made of the vine-tree from the kernels to the very husk. Strange that such small things as these, in which there could be no appearance of danger, should be forbidden! Yet not so strange as true; but by the contentment of these, they might be drawn to the desire of wine, and so be carried on to sin. Thus, the remote occasion was forbidden, to show how careful every one should be to avoid the least occasion of sin; hence is that prayer of David, "Remove from me

the way of lying," by the way, meaning the occasion of that sin. And heathen Seneca could say as much as we can, let us keep ourselves from slippery places; for even on dry ground it is not very strongly that we stand.—IBID.

There is nothing more ordinary than this: men conclude they are converted because they do not sin as they have done, whereas the true cause is this, the temptations and opportunities are removed; so that there is not the work of God's grace changing the heart, but the work of his providence removing the objects thereof. Snakes and adders lie in their holes, and are as well in winter as summer; yet because in winter they want the warm reviving beams of the sun, they do not appear out of their holes. Yet they still retain their poisonous venom and malignity—and let but the genial spring arrive, and the warm sun shine around them, and they will issue forth, their nature unchanged, as subtle and malignant as ever. Thus sin, it may be, is as lively and powerful in thee as ever, but there are not the kindly and warm temptations to draw it forth. Let the due occasion or season arrive, and it will shed its poison as freely as ever. The heart is still the same. The lion is a lion still, though his claws are pared, and he shut up in a dungeon; and thou mayest still be harbouring sin, though deprived of the instruments for committing it.

Regenerate men sin, yet the peace is not broken betwixt God and them, because their minds never yielded to sin. As it is betwixt princes, they are all peace though pirates of either nation rob the other subjects, yet it breaks not the peace, it being done without the will of the king: so it is with sin in God's children, it breaks not the peace betwixt God and them, because it is but a rebel, and they agree not to it. There is a difference betwixt entertaining of sins as thieves and robbers, and as guests and strangers; wicked men entertain sin as a guest, the godly man as a robber; the one invites it as a friend and acquaintance, the other throws it off as a rebellious traitor.—SPENCER.

The providence of God is in some way conversant about those actions that are sinful, but yet it is not in such a way as either argues him to be the author or approver of sin.

Accordingly, we might choose to express ourselves concerning the matter to this effect ; that the providence of God is conversant about those actions to which sin is annexed, rather than it is conversant about sin itself, or the obliquity or sinfulness thereof. Now, that we may understand this matter, we must distinguish between what is *nature*, and what is sinful in action ; the former is from God, the latter from ourselves. This may be illustrated by such similitudes as these. The motion of a bowl is from the hand that throws it ; but the irregularity of the motion when it turns out of a straight line is from the bias that turns it aside. So the motion of a horse is excited by the heel or spur of the rider ; but if it goes lame, the defect or halting it has in its motion proceeds from an inward indisposition in the horse and not the rider. Some illustrate it by similitude taken from the sun's drawing forth vapours from the earth, by that heat which has a tendency to exhale them ; but the stench that is exhaled from a dunghill is not from the sun, but from the nature of the subject from which it is drawn forth. So the providence of God enables sinners to act in a natural way ; but the sinfulness, irregularity, or moral effects that attend those actions is from the corruption of our own nature : or to speak more plainly, the man that blasphemes could not think or utter his blasphemy without the concurrence of the common providence of God, which enables him to think or speak—these are natural actions ; but that the thoughts or tongue should be set against God or goodness, that is from the depravity of our nature. Again, to kill or take away the life of a man is in some respects a natural action, as it cannot be done without thought or strength to excite what we design : these are the gifts of providence, and in this respect God concurs to the action. Thus Joab could not have killed Abner, or Amasa, if he had not had a natural power to use the instrument with which he did it : this was from God ; but the malice that prompted him to abuse these gifts of providence, and his hypocritical subtilty, and that dissimulation or disguise of friendship which gave him an opportunity to execute his bloody design, was from the wickedness of his own heart.

The providence of God may be conversant in an objective way, about those actions to which sin is annexed, without his being the author or approver of it. Sin would not be committed in many instances, if there were not some objects presented which give occasion thereunto. The object that presents itself may be from God, when the sin which is occasioned thereby is from the corruption of our nature. Thus Joseph's brethren would not have thought of selling him into Egypt, at least when they did, if he had not been sent to visit his brethren. Providence ordered his going to inquire of their welfare, and hereby the object was presented to them which their own corrupt nature inclined them to abuse. In the former of these respects, in which the providence of God was objectively conversant about this action, God is said to have sent Joseph into Egypt, though every circumstance that was vile and sinful therein was from themselves. This will further appear. An object might have been presented, and no sinful actions ensued. Thus the wedge of gold and the Babylonish garment were no temptation to other Israelites, who saw them among the spoils of Jericho, as well as Achan, though they were so to him through the covetousness of his own temper and the corruption of his nature, which now discovered itself, and moved him to this sinful action. So God knows that if the Gospel be preached, some will stumble under it. He orders, notwithstanding, that it shall be preached, that those whom he had ordained unto eternal life might be converted by it. And our Saviour appeared publicly at the feast of the pass-over, though he knew that the Jews would put him to death: the end of his going to Jerusalem was, not that he might draw forth their corruption—but that he might finish his work. Moreover, when the providence of God is said to be conversant about sin, it is in suffering or permitting it, and not in suggesting or tempting to it, for no one ought to say that he is "tempted of God," (James i. 13, 14,); but so far as the providence of God denies restraining grace, from whence corrupt nature takes occasion to break forth, it is conversant about sin occasionally, not effectively; as when the banks, or flood-gates that keep the waters within their

due bounds, are broken down by the owner thereof, who does not think fit to repair them, the waters will, according to the course of nature, overflow the country; or if the hedge or enclosure that secure the standing corn be taken away, the beasts by a propensity of nature will tread it down and devour it. So if that which would have a tendency to prevent or restrain sin be taken away, it will be committed. And the providence of God may do this either in a way of sovereignty, or as punishment for former sins committed, without being charged as the author of sin.

A fly with long legs and wings, of the tribe of gnats, had made several circuits round the candle, and at last fairly threw itself into the flame. After struggling for some time, with difficulty it effected its escape; not however without loss of limbs; yet notwithstanding its legs were somewhat shortened, its wings appeared uninjured; at any rate it took flight, and I did not see it again for some minutes. I had, however, scarcely ceased wondering at the folly and insensibility of the fly, when the little creature again presented itself to my notice. I soon perceived it had not learnt wisdom by its former warnings, for its whirlings and turnings round the candle seemed, if possible, swifter than before, as if it possessed no small degree of recklessness of life. Again, it had several narrow escapes, but again it flew swiftly to the evil, till at length, being tangled and overcome, it perished in the flame. Retreat. Take warning from the poor fly.

James i. 14, 15. 'Tis not the light, but the putrid matter, which makes the torch to send forth its stench, though it is true it was not till it was lighted. You cannot altogether blame Satan, suggestion can do nothing without lust; though it be Satan's flame, and he may hold the candle, yet the fire is in the wood.

The sin which is in our corrupt nature sticks to us to the last. One compares it to a wild fig tree which, however neglected or ill used, still flourishes. Or to ivy in the wall; cut off the body, the boughs, sprigs, branches, yet still there will be something sprouting up again until the

wall be digged down. Such is indwelling sin: though we pray, strive, and cut off the excrescences and its buddings out here and there, yet, till it be torn up by the strong hand of death, it continues in us.

History informs us that a certain king made a law against adultery, by which the offender on conviction was doomed to lose both his eyes. It unhappily turned out that the son of the king violated this law, and was convicted. What was to be done where the feelings of nature, or justice must sustain a severe suffering? Must the parent's heart be rent with the affecting sight of a child reduced to such extremity of misery, by virtue of a law of which he was the author; or must the stern demands of justice be outraged? Neither! An expedient was devised. He ordered one of his son's eyes to be put out, and he plucked out one of his own eyes. But how deeply were all affected with the guilt of a crime which could call for such a sacrifice, and in what a new light did the son behold his sin which he had before thought lightly of? When he looked upon his parent's affliction, of what magnitude did his crime appear in his eyes! Apply this to redemption. God, that his law may be honoured and his justice sustain no outrage, must behold his Son bleed, and expire on a cross of suffering. It is by the Father's hand that the Son must be bruised. It is He who must pour out the vials of his wrath upon his only begotten Son, and hide the light of his countenance from him who had dwelt in his bosom from all eternity. In what an awful light must sin appear in our eyes from such a display of God's wrath in the sight of the whole universe, from the infliction of such a retribution,—the demand for such a sacrifice!

A sheep and a pig may both travel on the road together without betraying their several propensities; but let them fall into a muddy ditch, and they will quickly discover their nature. The pig is the sinner; the sheep the believer; let them both fall into the slough of sin, the poor sheep will struggle and strive for its life to get out, the swinish sinner will lie and wallow with vast contentment in the muddy ditch of sin. How eagerly will the one fly to the fountain

and wash, that he may be clean ! How satisfied is the other with the filthy state to which his sin has reduced him !

Sincerity doth not so cover the sins of the believer as that he need not confess them, be humbled for them, or sue out a pardon for them : a penny is as due a debt as a pound, and therefore to be acknowledged ; indeed that which is a sin of infirmity in the committing, becomes a sin of presumption, by hiding of it, and hardening of it.

A father may, from his indulgence and love to his child, pass by a failing in his waiting upon him ; as if he spills the wine, or breaks the glass he is bringing to him ; but surely he will not allow him to throw it down willingly. Though a man may easily be entreated to forgive a man that wounded him unawares, when he meant him no hurt, yet he will not beforehand give him leave to do it.

A stone in a quarry requires stroke after stroke till separated, and transferred to the palace. No stone is so embedded in a quarry as sin in us ; stroke after stroke is necessary to loosen sin in us.

All inactive matter has an indisposition to be diverted, or a resistance which it makes to a change of state. Bodies appear to be not only incapable of changing their actual state, whether it be of motion or rest ; but to be endowed with a power of resisting such a change. We know that it requires force to put a body which is at rest in motion ; an exertion of strength is also requisite to stop a body which is already in motion. It is thus with the soul, which is not only incapable of changing its state whether to motion or rest, or putting forth any active powers, but, as in matter, there is lodged in it a power of resistance. This is the principle of evil which resists every motion from without to rouse the soul into spiritual life and activity, and nothing but a momentum, or power greater than this resistance, can fit it for the passive operations of grace.

Sincerity doth not so cover the saint's failings as to take away their sinful nature ; wandering thoughts are sins in a saint as well as in any other : a weed will be a weed wherever it grows, though in a garden among the choicest flowers ;

they mistake then, who, because the saint's sins are covered, deny them to be sins.

The spirit of God begets in the man that is born of the Spirit a natural hatred to sin, though he loved it in his old estate. The vulture's nature is to prey with horrid preference on the putrid carcases of the dead. But did you ever see the gentle dove gorging the loathsome food? So the sinner feeds with delight on the nauseous enjoyments of his iniquity, like the carrion-eating bird of prey, while the regenerate soul has a holy disgust of all that is offensive to his heavenly nature.

So effectually does the delusion of security enclose and encase the heart; "that the arrows of the Lord," though barbed and winged with an angel's hand, would fail to stick fast in it: so potent is the spell, that it enables us to listen, not only to truths the most pungent, but even the description which portrays the very delusion itself, without any self-application or effect. With such certainty does it turn aside, and ward off every salutary impression, that, like a building defended from the lightnings of heaven by a rod of steel, we can venture amongst the forked lightnings of the truth, and yet come out from them free, unscathed, and untouched.

The ceasing from the acts of sin does not always proceed from victorious grace. In the absence of alluring objects, there is a ceasing from the vicious acts; but the sinful intentions may be then most intense: as hunger is more sharp in a time of famine, when there is no food to satisfy it; and thirst, in a wilderness where there are no springs or fruits to refresh it, is more burning and tormenting. Sometimes, through impotence or age, men are disabled from doing the sin they still love: as a disease causes such a distaste of pleasing meats and drinks, that an intemperate person is forced to abstain from them. Sometimes conscience will check the issues of sin, as a winter's cold will keep down the rising of the sap in a tree: yet virtue is still in the root. But spiritual mortification is like the effect of a winter's severity on a tree, which, though not quite dead, can never afterwards supply more sap than will produce a few sickly

and abortive buds. Sin in the believer who *mortifies his members* is not merely restrained, but enfeebled, withered, and in a dying state.

That fear and pain should inseparably attend sin when the soul is in a healthy state, is one of the provisions of mercy. Sensibility to bodily pain is a benevolent provision, and is bestowed for the purpose of warning us to avoid such violence as would affect the functions or uses of its parts. The sensibilities of the human frame are appropriate endowments; not qualities necessarily arising from life; still less the consequences of delicacy of texture. They are suited to the degree of exposure of each part of the body, and destined for the protection of the different organs. We perceive no instance of pain being bestowed as a source of suffering, or punishment purely, without admitting that no happier contrivance could be found for the protection of the part. If the living frame were susceptible only of pleasurable sensations, it would be the same as placing it where injuries would meet it at every step, and whether felt or no, it would be destructive of life. And thus sin is accompanied with its sting, not so much to inflict punishment, as to preserve us from subjecting ourselves to its evils. By exposing the soul to suffering, it thus quickens it to watchfulness against the injuries it inflicts. The misery which it brings on the wounded conscience is intended to be its natural preservative. How merciful a condition is annexed to transgression—the pain of sin is the guardianship of piety and virtue.

Sin is a barbed and poisoned arrow, which, if once allowed to enter, will penetrate deeper and deeper, and will remain unless removed by a moral treatment adapted to the moral constitution of man; and the wound cannot be healed till the sin is taken away. You may cover it up, you may forget it, you may, like a man with a wounded side, take care to keep the wounded part from the slightest touch which may disturb its quiet—but the wound is still there, and it cannot be healed till the sting which was left in it is taken away.

There is no getting rid of the corrupt nature of man until death prostrates it in the dust. It is like the Jewish leprosy in the walls of the tainted house, which could never be era-

dicated until the whole building was taken down. But its nature undergoes a material change through the operation of grace upon it. Just as the virulent properties of an acid are neutralised by the mixture of alkali, the substance is not destroyed, or removed, but the character is changed—so the whole leaven of corruption, when acted on by grace, is altered in its pernicious effects, and assumes a new character, although it is not taken away.

What should we think of a young man who went straying about, and wandering like a vagabond over the country, exposed to hunger, and cold, and all the inclemency of the weather, without a friendly door to receive him, or money in his pocket to provide common necessities; and this too when he had an opulent estate for his provision, and a plentiful and delightful home to dwell in? Yet such is the madness of him who gives the full reins to a loose, carnal, and sensual mind, pursues the vanities, and stains his soul with the husks of this world's poor and sorry entertainment, while he neglects the solid comforts and delights of a heavenly Father's home; and turns from God "the habitation" of his people, and those pleasures of his house" which are "at his right hand for evermore."

Societies.

At present the extent of the evil prevailing in the heathen world, and the apparent hopelessness to the eye of sense of relief on a large scale, conspire to deaden the feeble sympathy of some, and to render others comparatively satisfied with their own callousness and indifference; just as a man of humanity, who could not see a miserable object perish at his own door without affording the relief within his power, might pass over a field of battle covered with the wounded and the dying, and be so shocked with the universality of the wretchedness, that he might not stretch a hand for the rescue of any individual sufferer. Multitudes, we fear,

because they cannot do what they would, omit to do what they can; but this is not the spirit of Him, who, while he wept to see the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd, *healed all those who came to him*, and then sent out his disciples, *to preach the glad tidings of the gospel* to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

Much praiseworthy zeal is expended in societies which have undertaken the business of enlightening the gentile world; but is it not to be feared that while we are engaged, some in making, some in hearing, speeches on the subject of sending the Bible to the heathen; and while we are contributing our money and our influence to the promotion of so blessed an object, we may be suffering the page of God's life-giving word to remain unread in our own homes? To participate in giving the blessing to others while we refuse to appropriate it also to ourselves, is as though the adventurous traveller, plunging into a deep, dark cavern, should place in another's hand the torch on which his own safety and his own life depended, and should take his separate way heedless of the unseen danger which he might encounter, the subterranean river on the one hand, or the precipitous abyss on the other. The madness of such a one would be sense and reason compared with the insane folly of those who, while they minister the word of God to the heathen, suffer not its rays to fall upon their own dark path.

There was a vessel overtaken by a storm, and in imminent danger of going down. The captain hoisted out the best boat, put the passengers into it, and gave them bread, a chart and compass. The storm increased, but the captain and some of the crew still clung to the sinking vessel, and a cry was heard from the boat which floated over the vessel, and fell on the ears of those on board: "Why will ye perish—O why will ye cling to that vessel, and be ruined?" Many of you, who, by your aid and contributions, have sent the Bible Society into the ocean of the world, are, alas! yourselves in a ruinous condition, and soon you must be in the billows of God's wrath. Hasten into the life-boat. There is the bread of life, and the chart of God's word, and the compass pointing to the polar star, Christ. O hear the voice

of those that are in it, and sailing securely over the billowy ocean—Why, O why will ye perish—why will ye die eternally?

It was said of the magnificent statue of Jupiter Phidias, that if it rose up from its place it would burst the roof of the building in which it was enthroned. And so is it with the spirit of christian missions; let her but once arise in the majesty of her divine strength, and the greatness of her colossal dimensions, and the vaulted dome of ignorance which covers the Jewish, Pagan, and Mahommedan world, shall be rent and burst asunder, and lie scattered in ruins at her feet.

In the days of the apostles, in the island of Pharos, near Alexandria, a magnificent tower was built which was seen at the distance of one hundred miles; on the top of which lights were placed, and kept burning during the night, and Pharos was the guide of similar erections. The Christian is to be a moral Pharos, or light-house, holding forth the word of life, and erected to direct endangered mariners into a safe harbour. He is to shine: how? first by a holy life in his own country at home. He should shine too in active exertions—"ye are the light of the world,"—"a city set on a hill cannot be hid,"—"let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify," not you, but "your Father which is in heaven." Untiring benevolence is the character of the true Christian. We must invade the kingdom of darkness, we must endeavour to kindle a bright flame of christian light in every quarter, till the whole earth be in possession of the invaluable blessing. Now religious societies afford you the advantage of united and consecrated efforts for this purpose; especially Bible societies, and Missionary societies are spreading this divine life far and wide. The Pharos of Alexandria might be seen one hundred miles,—the Pharos of missionary societies shines thousands, yea, more than thousands of miles: the Pharos of Alexandria could but direct the mariner to a temporal haven, and preserve his earthly existence,—the Pharos of the missionary cause guides immortal souls to eternal bliss. Should not his lights be burning? over what seas of error should

not these lights shine? Should not he point the deluded Mahommedan to the only true Prophet—the Ishmaelite of the seed of Abraham to his blessed High Priest and divine Redeemer, who ever lives to make intercession for us? Should he not direct the Hindoo from his multiplied idols to the true and living God—from the worship of evil spirits to the worship of all flesh—the only complete Saviour of man? What a scheme of christian and magnificent benevolence is the scheme of christian missions, originating in the mind of Christ! Surely, there is grandeur of spirit, there is largeness of mind in missionary enterprises far beyond all the projects of this world's ambition or glory!—
BICKERSTETH.

Soul.

It may be taken as a great and distinctly marked principle in the arrangement of nature, that there is nothing wasteful, and nothing unmeaning; and yet, unless man be appointed to a higher and nobler existence, it is undeniable that there has been bestowed on him a vast deal which is truly superfluous, and that no proportion whatever is maintained between the powers wherewith he is endowed, and the achievements which are placed within his reach. Who can contemplate man, and not perceive him to be possessed of energies and capacities which are thrown away, or lost, if a few years spent within the trammels of a circumscribed scene made up the sum-total of his being? If you extended man's life to thousands of years, and allowed not during this long period old age to enervate his powers, he might continue gathering in accessions of knowledge, in the varied scenes which now invite his research; but any one of which, far too ample to be traversed in the present span of existence, would remain unexhausted where centuries on centuries had been given to their investigation. And what is this but saying, that man is blessed with immeasurably larger capacities than it is possible to fill during the scant moments

of his lifetime; so that if at death he be altogether withdrawn from the theatre of being, he carries down with him into nothingness a rich freight of unemployed and undeveloped energies; and thus leaves behind him a record of the wastefulness of the Creator, and furnishes a proof that God bestows what is not wanted, and gives means without an end. We will just suppose, that which is matter of fact in man's intellectual constitution, were also matter of fact in his physical. If there were limbs, or nerves, or organs in man's body, which answered no present use, or whose office were inconsiderable when compared with their evident power, the anatomist who has rigidly learned that nature does nothing without an end, would be inclined to the persuasion that the body has yet to pass into some other condition, and that then the useless and half employed powers would find full room for exercise. It is certain that there is much in the anatomy of the infant which is only to be accounted for on the supposition that the infant is to grow into the man; and if we could find the same traces of a prospective arrangement in the full-grown man, the inference would seem unavoidable, that manhood is not the last stage of the body's existence, but that it is designed to be ushered into some broader arena, where the yet unused organs shall be all brought into play. But what we thus suppose in man's physical anatomy, is equally found in his intellectual and moral. There are embryo powers which are either not at all, or only partially called forth on earth; there are capacities which will hold immeasurably more than they are here required to contain; there is a grasp and tenacity of intellect which are as much out of place, if there be no futurity, as would be the sinew and grapple of a giant, when only a feather is to be raised, or a straw to be wielded; there are unutterable longings which find nothing in the present scene at all corresponding; in short, the soul of man cannot be "filled," it is too big for time, and craves eternity. And what do we infer from this ascertained disproportion between the powers and circumstances of man? Shall not the intellectual anatomist proceed, as in the like case the physical would proceed? Shall we not believe

that the excess of energies over present employment witnesses that the soul is appointed to a future and far higher career—that she is destined to expatiate in a sphere, compared to that which now binds her journeyings, which shrinks into a point? And shall we not learn from the known restlessness of man, from the fact, (which, be it observed, is the sole exception to the rule, and the single instance of departure from uniform principle,) the fact that creation cannot satisfy the creature, but that the world with all it can afford is too little—shall we not learn from this, that the death of the body terminates not the existence of the spirit; but that in some yet untravelled region, into which the soul shall be hereafter translated, there are objects great enough and glorious enough to engage our every power, and crown our every capacity, and satiate our every longing.—MELVILL.

It is sad to think of the injury that men do to their own souls; they go with famished souls from day to day, while they have most proper and suitable nutriment for them just at hand, but they will not touch so as to taste or feed upon these things. Starving in the midst of plenty is their case; it is as if a sick man should have by him, in the midst of his languishing sickness, some vial of very choice and precious spirits, that in all likelihood would be relieving to him, and save him from death; but he keeps it by him, and will discourse to you very curiously and philosophically concerning the nature and virtues of this thing, yet never uses it, nor apprehends that he is concerned to use it, or that his case requires it; and so dies away with a medicine at hand all the while that might have saved his life.—SPENCER.

There is not in the compass of nature a more lively emblem of the soul, imprisoned in this mortal body, than (homely as the comparison may appear) that of a bird in the egg. The little animal, though thus confined, is in the midst of the scenes of its future life. It is not distance which excludes it from the air, the light, and all the objects with which it will so soon be conversant. It is in the midst of them, though utterly shut out from them; and, when the moment for bursting its enclosure comes,

will be ushered into a new world, and translated into scenes unknown before, not by the change of place, but by passing into another state of existence. So it is with the soul. It is now, in a certain sense, *in eternity*, and surrounded with eternal things. Even the body to which it is attached stands out on the surface of this globe, in infinite space. Besides, the spiritual world envelopes it on every side ! It is encompassed with a cloud of witnesses ; innumerable Spirits encamp about it ; and God is as intimately present to it, as to the highest angel that beholds his face in heaven. Nevertheless, to realise to itself the nearness and the presence of these natural objects, at least to know them as it will know them hereafter, is a thing impossible. Why ? Not because any tract of space is interposed between the soul and them, but because the spiritual principle, while united to flesh, is, by the laws of that union, so imprisoned in the body, as to be denied all means of intercourse with those scenes which lie around its prison walls. The hand of death alone can unbar the door, and let the spirit out into the free air, and open daylight of eternity. There is one important particular more, in which this analogy holds. Unless the embryo is vivified while in the egg, it can receive no vitalising principle after. If the shell is broken, the young bird comes out dead. Thus it is also with the soul. Unless impregnated with spiritual life, before it leaves the body, it will come forth still born into eternity, and continue for ever dead in trespasses and sins.—WOODWARD.

When you enter on an estate, you may see a mud-built hovel, wretchedly constructed, and indicating the meanness of him who reared it, and of those who dwell in it ; and as you advance forwards on the same estate, you shall see a stately mansion carrying on its very aspect grandeur and magnificence ; and as you survey its various parts and decorations, you perceive it was not raised, like the low hovel, by some ignorant peasant in the village, but by an architect of an enlarged capacity and cultivated genius : while all that is around it bespeaks the dignity and wealth of its owner. So it is with the soul of one man who is inhabited by the Holy Spirit, while another is destitute of it. The condition

of the one—all poverty, all meanness, all insignificance, and indicating the spiritual ignorance and poverty of the true riches of Christ—the soul an empty tenement. The other plainly indicating the enlightened views, and enlarged soul of him who had been under the operation of the Holy Spirit, evidencing him to be wealthy in the spiritual gifts and graces of Christ's Spirit; in a word, a man whose soul is enriched and adorned by the presence of God.

The wintry day is a striking emblem of the state of the soul of every individual till it is renewed. The mind of the sinner is so benighted, that he sees no glory in God: his heart is so cold that he is a stranger to the sweet emotions of love and gratitude; and his life is barren, like the wintry soil, of the wholesome fruits of righteousness. The day in spring, on the contrary, is obviously descriptive of the renewed soul—all is life, animation, fruitfulness. Then the eye is opened, and God has said, "Let there be light," and there is light. It is the blessed dawn of an eternal day. It is the work of God to change the gloomy month of winter for the delightful season of spring: "Every good gift," &c. No one but he that formed the spring can renew it. No human power could have introduced the spring a month earlier, or have introduced it at all. So the efforts of the greatest and best of men for the renewal of sinners, without the gracious influences of the Spirit, will be equally inefficacious.

The soul of every man is a vessel launched in time, and sailing into the ocean of eternity. It has a precious cargo on board, an understanding that is capable of knowing and embracing God, a conscience which has been lighted up by the Holy Ghost, and a never-dying spirit. But sin has brought this precious vessel into deep and troubled waters, and stirred up a mighty tempest round about her; and unless we send to her the life-boat to bring her out of these deeps, she must go down, and be swallowed up in this vortex of destruction.

It is not every unclean thing that offends the sight: while the slightest stain upon some things will excite in us deep dislike; the feeling depends entirely upon the nature of the

thing, and the purpose to which it is applied. We pass by an unclean stone unnoticed; it is unconscious of its state, and meant to be trampled under foot. But rising a step higher in the scale of creation, to an unclean plant, we become conscious of a slight emotion of dislike; because we see that which might have pleased the eye, and have beautified a spot in the creation, disfigured and useless. An unclean animal creates our dislike still more, for, instead of proving useful in any way, it is merely a moving pollution. But an unclean human being excites our loathing more than all; it presents our nature in a light so disgusting that it lessens our pity for him, if he be miserable, and excites in us ideas of disease, contamination, and pain. But an unclean spirit—it is loathsome above all things, it is the soul and essence of pollution, it is the most unclean object in the universe, it is the spectacle which excites the deep dislike of God himself. His dislike of it is the more intense, because originally it was pure, and capable of making perpetual advances towards divine perfection; whereas now it presents itself to his eye, robbed of all its purity, and defiled in all its powers, a fountain of pollution.

We see the power of God employed in bringing about events of the first importance from mere minutiae. In the little tiny seed we can but ill descry the beauteous or stately tree which is to spring from it. Had we never known the beauties of a full-blown rose, we could not foretell from looking on the bud the future splendour of the flower, nor trace the blaze of a meridian day in a morning sky. So when we consider the soul in her feeble state, disfigured and defaced, and with but little of heaven's comeliness upon it—we could never anticipate, from its close alliance with a perishing body, that "this corruptible shall put on incorruption," and the soul shine forth in all the glories of the divine image.

The Sacrament.

As by a ring, or a meaner instrument of conveyance, a man may be settled in land, or put into an office, and by such conveyance the ratification of such grants is said to be real; how much more so is the gift and receipt of Christ's body and blood, when conveyed unto us by the confirmation of the eternal Spirit! For observe, "it is the same Spirit" that is in Christ, and that is in us, and we are "quickened by one and the same Spirit." Therefore it cannot choose but that a real union must follow between Christ and us; as there is a union between all the parts of the body by the animation of one soul.

There are many instances that are pregnant to prove how pieces of something broken and divided into many shares do import a communication of somewhat among the dividers. The heathen, at the making of a league, did now and then break a flint-stone to pieces; and they that entered into a league, kept the parts in token of a covenant. Some upon a contract of marriage will break a piece of gold, and the two halves are reserved by the contractors. Shall I go further, and yet come nearest to the case? The Roman soldiers parted our Saviour's garment among them, and in that symbolical accident is shown that the gentiles should share in the satisfaction of his death. So the believer takes this morsel of bread. The same ticket, in words, in substance, is put into every hand, on which is written, "Take, and eat in remembrance of me."

The flesh of the sacrifice at the consecration of the priests, with the meat-offering annexed to it, was divided between God, and them; we eat with God, and God with us. A table was furnished with shew-bread only to be looked at, but to our table all Christians are invited guests, and to them it is said, "Eat, O friends;" *they* could give but a sight; the Gospel the enjoyment of it, and a hearty welcome.

It is an acknowledgment to us, by the Deity, of a perfect equivalence, a sufficiently valuable consideration for our

blessedness having been accepted on our behalf. It is showing us the receipt in full, with the value received, for our transgressions, sins, and iniquities. Or, rather, it is a delivery into our hands, and into our keeping, as it were, of such receipts. For we are not only to behold the broken bread, and effused wine, but to take them, to eat the one and drink the other.

The salvation purchased by Christ is "a common salvation," of which we cannot partake but by joining with the church or body of men to whom that privilege was granted: we can receive no influence from the head except we are members of the body, and join in those outward actions, the sacraments and prayers, by which communion with Christ we are all one body, because we are really partakers of the same bread, and the same cup of blessing. Every branch of a tree must be sapless and perish, if it be not duly and properly incorporated with the body of the tree. Will a man say he is of the household of God, who never eats the bread of God in his house, and with his family?

It is undeniable that as sacraments are "generally necessary to salvation," whoever continues to live in the wilful neglect of the Lord's supper is under condemnation. He cannot be Christ's disciple, for he denies him in the world. He presumptuously breaks one of God's commandments, and is therefore guilty as a transgressor of the whole law. But it is not merely the bare refusal of this sacrament, but the secret disposition and state of heart which such a neglect discovers—and of which it is the infallible mark, which proves his pretension to religion to be vain. Take the case of a man in whom the process of inward mortification is going on. This is not visible, and is altogether hid from general observation. But the black and livid spots on the limb distinctly mark the fatal disorder within. The patient's attention is confined to the part which is affected, and he little dreams of its connexion with the work of death which is going forwards. But to the experienced eye the fatal process is fully disclosed by that little spot of livid flesh. It would not be there if mortification was not present. To the continued and resolute refusal to sup with Christ, though to

the party himself, and to others, it may appear a venial matter, and to be accounted only as the neglect of *one* of the ordinances of the church, yet, in the judgment of all who are taught of God, it is indicative of a fatally disordered state of the heart—it marks the universal indisposition to assume that sacred badge of discipleship and separation from the world. It proves the disaffection and disloyalty to Christ's government and institutions which reigns within, and that something is loved and cherished as better than obedience and love to the Saviour. For in the case under consideration, it is no other than an indisposition to commit ourselves by giving a pledge that we design that high and holy walk in life which belongs to Christ's disciples. We would not come under such a yoke. And just as there would be no living marks in the case supposed, where there was no mortification—so there would be no wilful refusal of the holy supper, were the disposition of our heart in a sound and healthy state. In both of these cases the process of death is going forwards.

All men speak honourable things of the sacrament, except wicked persons and the scorers of religion: and though of several persons, like the beholders of a dove walking in the sun, as they stand in several aspects and distances, some see red and others purple, and yet some perceive nothing but green, but all allow and love the beauties; so do the several forms of Christians, according as they are instructed by their first teachers, or their own experience, conducted by their fancy, and proper principle, look upon these glorious mysteries, some as virtually containing the reward of obedience; some as solemnities of thanksgiving, and records of blessings; some as the objective increase of faith; others as the sacramental participations of Christ; others as the acts and instruments of natural union; yet all affirm some great things or other of it, and by their differences confess the immensity and the glory. For thus manna represented to every man the taste that himself did like; but it had in its own potentiality all those tastes and dispositions eminently and altogether; it could speak of great and many excellences, and all confessed it to be enough, and to be the food of

angels ; so it is here, it is that to every man's faith, which his faith wisely apprehends ; and though there are some of little faith, and such receive but a less proportion of nourishment, yet by the very use of this sacrament, the appetite will increase, and the apprehensions grow greater, and the faith will be more confident and instructed ; and then we shall see more and feel more.

This holy nutriment is not only food, but physic too ; and although to him who believes great things of his physician and of his medicine, it is apt to do the more advantage, yet it will do its main work.

They who receive the blessed sacrament must not suppose that the blessings of it are effected as health is by physic, or warmth by the contact and neighbourhood of fire ; but as music one way affects the soul, and witty discourses another, and joyful tidings a way differing from both the former, so the operations of the sacrament are produced by an energy of a nature entirely differing from all things else. But however it is done, the thing that is done is this ; no grace is there improved but what we bring along with us ; no increases but what we exercise.

A deed is an instrument which makes over, and gives a title to another to a possession of certain propriety. A kind benefactor designs to bestow upon you a valuable estate, and a deed of gift, or the title-deeds, must be given in your possession. Without this you have no legal instrument to make good your claims to it. The next heir or some relative may hereafter dispute it with you for want of that which can alone substantiate your right to the possession. The kindness and intentions of your benefactor that you should enjoy it may be most undeniable—but one thing is wanting, a deed of conveyance, and in the eye of the law you have no written title to it more than another. Such is the sacrament of the Lord's supper, which instrumentally makes over to the believers the blessings of his Lord. As a deed is capable of transferring property to the vastest amount, so this simple institution makes over to the parties concerned the most transcendent blessings. "Take, eat, drink ye all (my children) of this"—take possession of, receive this

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pledge of your title to an interest in all that I have to bestow. With my body and blood I make over to you all the purchase of my death and merits. But what of those who reject it? "Behold ye despisers, and wonder, and perish." Where is the pledge of your interest in a Saviour's merits? "Verily, verily I say unto you, except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you." And how can ye pretend to eat it by faith, when ye reject the very ordinance which was instituted to make over a formal conveyance of a Saviour's body and blood to those who prove their "love to him by keeping his commandments." If he who neglected the regular observance of the passover was to be cut off from the people of Israel and perish, what better fate can await him who turns his back on an institution so much greater than the passover, as the blood of Christ exceeds in value the blood of a lamb?—What title can he have, any more than the ancient Israelite, to the benefits of God's chosen people!

There is much water in the well or spring-head; it comes to us in leaden pipes or wooden troughs. Now what is the leaden pipe, or wooden trough more than another? Nothing at all; it is the water in the pipe or trough that makes them esteemed above others. It is true, they can do more than others; if you look upon them in their use, *i. e.* to convey the water unto us, then they are more excellent than all others whatsoever. So in the Sacraments of Baptism, and the Lord's Supper, there is water in the one, and bread and wine, in the other: yet what is this water, this bread and wine more than any other? Are not they the same we have at home? Yea; O but if we look upon them as ordained of God to convey his mercies into our hearts, to seal unto our souls the remission of sins, &c., and that God hath set them aside to that end and purpose, then they are more excellent than any other water, bread, or wine possibly can be.—SPENCER.

An instrument or conveyance of lands from one party to another, being fairly engrossed in parchment, with wax fastened upon it, is no more than ordinary parchment and wax; but when it comes once to be sealed and delivered to

the use of the party concerned, then it is changed into another quality, and made a matter of high concernment. Thus the elements of bread and wine are the same in substance with the other bread and wine, before and after the administration is passed, the same in quality, the bread dry, the wine moist; the same in nature, the bread to support, the wine to comfort the heart of man; but being once separated (not by any spells, or signing with the sign of the cross; not by any popish, carnal, sensual translation, nor any Lutheran consubstantiation) from a common to a holy use; when Christ's name is set on them, in regard of institution, consecration, operation, and blessing attending on them; then they become Christ's bread and God's wine, and the table God's table too: not the bread of the buttery, but of the sanctuary; not the wine of the grape only, but of the Vine Christ Jesus, sealing upon us the pardon and remission of our sins. So that in the right receiving thereof, we must make it a work not so much to look on the elements what they are, but what they signify; look through the bush, and see God through the sacrament, and see Christ Jesus to our comfort.—IBID.

It is an expression of the apostle, "consider the Lord Jesus," let not your views be sudden, transient glances, which do no good; but represent the Lord Jesus before your eyes in a serious, solemn manner. Kings do many times represent their own persons in the *broad seal*; they sit upon a throne sceptered and the like; so Christ in the sacrament (which is the *seal of heaven*) represents his own person. There is only this difference, the picture of a king is a dead representation; but the Lord Christ in the sacrament is most livelily, and efficaciously represented to the soul.

The peace of God in the sacraments and other means of grace is usually a blessing upon our endeavours: for spiritual graces and the blessings of sanctification do not grow like grass, but like corn—not whether we do any husbandry or no; but if we cultivate the ground, then, by God's blessing, the fruit will spring and make the farmer rich.

As by faith we have the evidence, so by the sacrament we have the presence of things farthest distant and absent

from us. A man that looks on the light through a shadow doth truly and really receive the self-same light which he would in the openest and clearest sunshine, though after a different manner.

The sin-offerings under the law were entirely consumed in their consecration to divine justice, and no part was designed to be eaten by the offerer; to signify their imperfection and inefficacy to reconcile God to sinners, and to bestow life. The beasts by substitution suffered death for those who offered them, but could not purchase life for them. Our Saviour is as truly given to us to communicate life, as he was given for us in his death. When he offered himself the most solemn sacrifice on the cross, he was not consumed; the ordinance of the Lord's Supper is not therefore a *naked sign* of his sufferings for us, but presents to us his body and blood as a feast of love upon his sacrifice, that the soul may live for ever. *The blood of the Lamb, the true vine, has rejoiced the heart of God and man!*

When pagans beheld Christians receiving the blessed sacrament, and observed with what reverence and devotion they demeaned themselves in that holy business, one was inquisitive what that action meant. It was answered by one of the Christians, that God having first emptied their hearts of all their sins, as pride, envy, covetousness, contention, luxury, and the rest, did now enter into them himself with a purpose to dwell there. He was silent for the present, but followed and watched them whom he saw to be communicants in that action for two days together; and perceiving some of them to fall into quarrels, uncleanness, drunkenness, and so on, he declared his censure of them with this exclamation, "I confess that your religion be good, your devotion good, your profession good, but sure your hospitality is slack enough that you will not give your God two days' lodging." Here now was a sad occasion for the enemies of God to judge of them that seem to make profession of his holy name. This is the shame of Christians, the disparagement of religion; when it is forced against the nature of it to encourage lewdness, 'tis an abuse of the promised grace of the covenants and pledges of grace, which

are the sacraments, when encouragements to evil are derived from so merciful an indulgence.—SPENCER.

Temptations.

The surest way to conquer is sometimes to decline a battle, to weary out the enemy by keeping him at bay. Fabius Maximus did not use this stratagem more successfully against Hannibal than a Christian may against his peculiar vice, if he be but watchful of his advantages. It is dangerous to provoke an unequal enemy to the fight, or to run into such a situation where we cannot expect to escape without a disadvantageous encounter.

Worms, and other insects, take up their habitation under the surface of the earth. A plot of ground may be outwardly verdant with grass, and decorated with flowers. But take a spade in your hand, and turn up the mould, and you soon have a sample of the vermin that lurks beneath. Temptation is the spade which breaks up the ground of a believer's heart, and helps to discover the corruptions of his fallen nature.

There is a vast difference between the sight of a storm at sea, and a ship in violent agitation by the winds and waves, and the miserable passengers with pale affrighted countenances expecting present death, in a lively picture, and being in a real ship, in the midst of a real tempest, and in actual danger of being swallowed up by the ocean. The sight of such a spectacle without fear, is but painted courage, as the object upon which 'tis exercised. If one should presume his heart were impenetrable to fear, because he sees the representation of extreme danger without fear, it were egregious folly, and would be soon confuted if he were actually in extreme danger of perishing in the raging sea. Thus there is a great difference between temptations represented in our thoughts, and when immediately and really before us; and between religious resolutions when temptations are at a distance, and when actually incumbent on us. There may

be such resolutions conceived in the mind in the absence of temptations, that we may think ourselves guarded safely against our sins ; and yet, at the first encounter of a strong temptation, our resolution may cool and faint, and our vows of obedience may vanish as the morning dew before the heat of the sun.

Set a narrow-mouthed glass near to a bee-hive, and you may soon perceive how busily the wasps resort to it, being drawn to it by the smell of sweet liquor, wherewith it is baited ; and how eagerly they creep into the mouth of it, and fall down suddenly from that slippery steepiness into that watery trap, from which they can never rise ; but after some vain labours and weariness, they drown and die. Now there are none of the bees that as much as look that way, they pass directly to their hive, without any notice taken of such a pleasing bait. Thus idle and ill-disposed persons are easily drawn away with every temptation ; they have both leisure and will to entertain every sweet allurements to sin, and wantonly prosecute their own wicked lusts, till they fall into irrecoverable destruction ; whereas, the diligent and laborious Christian that follows hard and conscionably the works of an honest calling, is free from the danger of those deadly enticements, and lays up honey of comfort against the winter of evil.—SPENCER.

As the fly that plays about the candle often doth burn its wings at the last ; so the Christian who parleys with temptation, is in danger of having the wings of his soul so shortened by the furious darts of Satan, that he will not be able to rise again towards heaven, till God shall send him renewed affections.

To every thing there is a season. Eccl. iii, 1. A hundred soldiers at one time may turn a battle, save an army, when thousands will not do it at another. So Satan knows when to make his approaches, when (if at any time) he is most likely to be entertained.

Thoughts.

As in the world we frequently meet with bad company, so in solitude we are often troubled with impertinent and unprofitable thoughts, as well as entertained with agreeable and useful ones. And a man that hath so far lost the command of himself, as to lie at the mercy of every foolish or vexing thought, is much in the same situation as a host whose house is open to all comers, whom, though ever so noisy, rude, and troublesome, he cannot get rid of; however, with this difference, that the latter hath some recompense for his trouble, the former none at all, but is robbed of his peace and quiet for nothing.

We should intermix holy thoughts with all that we do; this were to walk with God indeed: to go all the day long as in our Father's hand: whereas, without this, our praying morning and evening looks but as a formal visit, not delighting in that constant converse which yet is our happiness and honour, and makes all estates sweet. This would refresh us in the hardest labour; as they that carry spices from Arabia are refreshed with the smell of them in their journey; and some observe that it keeps their strength, and frees from fainting.

The thoughts of spiritual things, are with many as guests that come into an inn, and not like children that dwell in the house: they enter occasionally, and there is a great ado to provide for them proper entertainment. Presently they depart, and are not looked or inquired after any more: things of another nature are attended to, and new occasions bring in new guests for a season. So it is with those occasional thoughts about spiritual things. But those that are genuine and natural, arising from a living and internal spring, they dispose the mind to them, like children living in the house; they are expected at their places and seasons, and if they are missing, they are inquired after; the soul calls itself to account, why it is that it has been

so long without them, and summons them to its wonted converse and fellowship.

An angler having baited his hook, throws it into the water; the fish having espied the bait, after two or three vagaries about it, nibbles at it, and after a while swallows down the bait, hook and all. The fisher sees none of all this; but by the sinking of the cork he knows that the fish is taken. Thus Satan (though a most cunning angler) knows not the thoughts of men, such as are mere pure thoughts, that's God's peculiar, it is He that searcheth the heart, and trieth the reins; but if we write or speak, if the cork do but stir, if our countenance do but change, he is of such perspicuity, and so well experienced withal, that he will soon know what our thoughts are, and suit his temptations accordingly.—SPENCER.

There is a difference between good thoughts that ascend from the frame of our hearts, and those that are injected from without. For instance, a gracious man's holy thoughts ascend from the spiritual frame that is within his soul; but now a wicked man may have holy thoughts cast into him as a flash of lightning in the night, which doth not make a day; neither doth the injection of some holy thoughts argue the frame of his heart spiritual and holy. When he hath been hearing a warm sermon, then he thinks with himself, heaven deserves his choice, and eager pursuits; this is but from without, and therefore doth not argue that he is spiritual.

Regeneration changeth the frame of our thoughts, and maketh us to mount upwards. Gracious souls are disposed for it; what Christ spake concerning leaven in the gospel, it raiseth the meal and swells it; so when grace is put into thy soul, it insinuates itself into thy thoughts, into thy discourse, into thy actions. Those that are regenerated can in some measure perform their duties naturally and easily; it is as easy for the flame to ascend as for a stone to descend. A vine doth with as much ease produce grapes as a thistle or a thorn doth prickles; and, therefore, thy heart may produce spiritual meditations with almost as much ease as a carnal man shall produce sensual, corrupt,

vile thoughts, if thou dost not injure the divine nature, but exercise it in sending up holy thoughts towards God.

Truth.

In the body of man, one member will not lie to another ; the hand will not lie in telling what it toucheth ; the tongue will not lie in telling what it tasteth ; the eye will not lie in telling what it seeth ; but every member is a true witness to another, a true witness to his neighbour. And thus it should be in a body politic of government and society, in the mystical body of the church and Christianity, that seeing we are members one with another, every one should speak the truth to his neighbour ; and such should be the case of those especially, as profess Christianity, as to lose their breath, rather than to use their breath, in speaking any untruth to another.—SPENCER.

Fancy draws a copy of those objects that are perceived by the external senses, or compounds many copies together, but creates no images of things not perceptible by the senses. We can imagine mountains of gold, because we have seen gold and mountains : we conceive monstrous mixtures in dreams ; but no actors can appear on the theatre of fancy, but in borrowed habits from sensible things. But the objects of faith are such things, *as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard*, and transcend the capacity of the imagination to conceive, and of the external senses to represent : yet infidels blaspheme the eternal truths of divine things as the fictions of fancy.

Reason corrects the errors of sense, faith reforms the judgment of reason. The stars seem but glittering points ; but reason convinces us they are vast bodies, by measuring the distance that lessens their greatness to our sight. We cannot imagine that there are men whose feet are directly opposite to ours, and are in no danger of falling : but reason demonstrates that there are *antipodes*. 'Tis as absurd

for reason to reject divine testimony, and violate the sacred respect of faith, as for sense to contradict the clearest principles of reason. To deny supernatural truths, because they are above our conception and capacity, is not only against faith, but against reason that acknowledges its own imperfection.

Time.

It was day at Jerusalem in Christ's time, at Ephesus in St. John's time, at Corinth, Philippi, &c., in St. Paul's time, at Crete in Titus' time, at Alexandria in St. Mark's time, at Smyrna in Polycarp's time, at Pergamus in Antipas' time, at Antioch in Evodius and Ignatius' time, at Constantinople in St. Chrysostom's time, in Hippo in St. Augustine's time, &c. It is now night with most of them, and yet day with us: Jerusalem had a day, and every city, every nation, every church, every congregation, every man, hath a day of grace, if he have but grace to take notice of it,—hath an accepted time, if he do but accept of it, and may find God if he seek him in time; but if he let the sun of righteousness go down, and work not out his salvation "whilst it is called to-day," he must look for nothing but perpetual darkness, when time will be swallowed up into eternity, when there will be no time at all.—SPENCER.

The condition of those who find themselves at the close of one year, and the beginning of another without having improved it to the glory of God, is a hopeless one as it respects the *past*. Their case is the case of a prodigal who has squandered an estate which he can never redeem. Regret and sorrow cannot recover it. It has been spent, and nothing remains. It is so with the past, yes—it has fled—it has for ever escaped his grasp. Repentance cannot recall it. It would have yielded immortal fruits had it been cultivated, and its riches would have accom-

panied him into eternity. It is a remediless, hopeless case ; and even in the event of the future conversion of the soul, still that year, and all the preceding ones, are a loss that no ingenuity, no tears of penitence can recover.

Let time be compared with eternity. If we look at the reasonings and practice of mankind, we shall find that a very small quantity is disregarded, and treated as nothing when put in competition with one vastly greater than itself. When the difference is very wide, the greater annihilates the less in our daily estimation. Thus, in the payment of a large sum of money, the odd pence are seldom taken notice of, the number of pounds drives them wholly out of consideration. A tradesman would consider ten pounds a fair discharge of an invoice of ten pounds and three pence half-penny, though he might take three pence half-penny from the next customer without expecting to abate any part of it. This shows that the small sum is not without value when taken by itself, that it came to be neglected in the first instance, only because it happened to be put in comparison with one so much larger than itself. Nor must this be attributed to a careless mode of transacting business, which has somehow or other grown into fashion in certain departments of trade, for it is obvious in the mathematics, where exactness has become a proverb. Certain quantities are often neglected because, in comparison with others, they are indefinitely small ; and if in an analytic or algebraic demonstration one of the quantities is supposed to become indefinite, all the others, which would otherwise have been added to or subtracted from it, are considered as vanishing, or become "0." Now, if we act like men of business or reason, like mathematicians about time and eternity, we must regard the former, when compared with the latter, as the odd pence of a large account, or the indefinite small quantity in our calculations. This is to be done, not because time, or the life of man, is, when taken by itself, inconsiderable, but because whatever is transcribed here vanishes when laid in the balance with the knowledge of that period, "when that which is in part will be done away." Now, it is not the worldling

only, that in reference to spiritual things inverts the rule established by the reasoning and custom of man, but the Christian who daily, in some sort or other, gives up eternity for time.

To infuse a spirit of devotion into all things, this is the great art of christian chymistry ; to convert those acts which are materially natural or civil into acts truly and formally religious, whereby the whole course of this life is both truly and interpretatively a service to Almighty God, and an uninterrupted state of religion ; this is the best, noblest, and most universal redemption of time.

Trinity.

The Father is placed first, and really is the first person, not as if he were before the other, for they are all co-eternal ; but because the other two receive their essence from him ; for the Son was begotten of the Father, and the Holy Ghost proceeded from the Father and the Son ; therefore the Father is termed by primitive Christians the root and fountain of Deity. As in water there is the fountain or well-head, then there is the spring that boils up out of the fountain, and then there is the stream that flows both from the fountain and the spring, and yet all these are but one and the same water ; so here God the Father is the fountain of Deity ; the Son as the spring that boils up out of the fountain ; and the Holy Ghost the stream that flows from both, and yet all these are but one and the same God. The same may be also explained by another familiar instance. The sun begets the beams, and from the sun and beams together proceed both light and heat ; so God the Father begets the Son, and from the Father and the Son together proceed the Holy Spirit. But as the sun is not before the beams, nor the beams before the light and heat, but all are together ; so, neither is the Father before the

Son, nor Father or Son before the Holy Ghost, but only in order, and relation one to another.—SPENCER.

The light of the sun, the light of the moon, the light of the air, for nature and substance are one and the same light; and yet they are three distinct lights; the light of the sun being of itself, and from none, the light of the moon from the sun, and the light of the air from them both; so the divine nature is one, and the persons three, subsisting after a diverse manner in one and the same nature.—*IBID.*

Union.

The least drop of water hath the nature of its element, hath the entire properties of it, partakes of the round figure of that element, and best agrees with, and unites itself to water. In like manner it is with fire, and the rest of the elements, being homogeneal bodies, every part doth participate of the name and nature of the whole, shuns what is contrary to that nature, and most willingly gathers itself to that which is of the same kind. So it is with the true members of that mystical body whereof Christ is the head; such is the union, unanimity, association and fellowship of the people of God one amongst another, that they cannot suffer themselves to be combined with wicked persons and unbelievers; no, they will associate unto themselves none, by their good wills, who are not endowed with grace and goodness, and a godly conversation, being the true qualities and marks of that true church whereof they themselves are true members.—SPENCER.

Melancthon persuading the divided Protestants of his time to peace and unity, illustrateth his argument by a notable parable of the wolves and dogs, who were marching onwards to fight one against another. The wolves, that they might the better know the strength of their adversary, sent forth a master wolf as their scout. The scout returns, and tells

the wolves, that indeed the dogs were more in number, but yet they should not be discouraged; for he observed that the dogs were not one like another; a few mastiffs there were, but the most were little ones, which could only bark, but not bite, and would be afraid of their own shadow. Another thing also he observed, which would much encourage them, and that was, that the dogs did march as if they were more offended at themselves than with us; not keeping their ranks, but grinning and snarling, and biting and tearing one another, as if they would save us a labour. And therefore let us march on resolutely, for our enemies are their own enemies; enemies to themselves and their own peace, they bite and devour each other, and therefore we shall certainly devour them. Though a kingdom or church be never so well provided, yet notwithstanding, if divisions and heart-burnings get among its members, like a spreading gangrene, they will infect the whole; and like a breach made in the walls of a city besieged, they will let in the enemy to destroy it. Nay, though there should be a kingdom of saints, if differences and distractions get within that kingdom, they will, like the worm in Jonah's gourd, eat up all the happiness of it in one night.—*IBID.*

Suppose the troops of two different nations which were leagued together against the common enemy, should under the influence of natural prejudices be continually engaged in quarrels. And while they expected to be besieged, instead of strengthening the outer walls of their fortifications, they employed themselves in raising lines of partition to keep separate from one another. Their common interests must greatly suffer. Let them continue to wear their natural costume, and each prefer their own tactics and peculiar discipline; but let them remember that coldness and lukewarmness in their efforts to assist each other against the enemy, and maintain the cause for which they were enlisted, would be sadly betraying the interests of the Sovereign in whose services they were engaged. What must we think of those individuals who are more intent to draw lines of distinction than to agree to differ? The true soldiers of Jesus Christ should hold it necessary to raise and strengthen the

wall by which Christ's Church is surrounded, and that not for the purpose of intercepting the flow of kindness and christian philanthropy from *within*, but for the purpose of intercepting the streams of contamination from without. The line of partition which obtains between the church and the world—the line which measures off the ground of vital and evangelical religion from the general ungodliness of mere profession, must be preserved and strengthened. The latitudinarianism which would pull down one of its stones must be abhorred as treason. Let an impregnable sacredness be thrown around the people who stand peculiarized by their devotedness, and their faith, from the general bulk of a species who are of the earth and earthly. There are landmarks between the children of light and the children of darkness which can never be moved away; but for the lines of partition which have been drawn among themselves, let them be utterly swept away. The signals of distinction between one party of Christians and another need not be put down, but each allowed to wear its own. But with zeal for essentials, they must tolerate each other in the circumstances of their faith; and under all the variety which they wear, whether of complexion or of outward observance, let them recognise the brotherhood of a common doctrine, and of the common spirit of Christianity. How else, in thus weakening the cause of Christ, can we be free from the guilt of disloyalty to our Lord! What scriptural partition has he raised between believers but this for our guidance.—“That they all may be one, as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us; that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”

Union is power. The most attenuated thread when sufficiently multiplied will form the strongest cable. A single drop of water is a weak and powerless thing; but an infinite number of drops united by the force of attraction will form a stream; and many streams combined will form a river; till rivers pour their waters into the mighty ocean, whose proud waves defying the power of man none can stay but He who formed them. And thus forces, which acting singly are utterly impotent, are, when acting in combination

resistless in their energies, mighty in power. And when this great union of the several powers of the Church shall be brought to bear unitedly on one point, its triumph will be the subjection of a world to Christ which now defers the solitary efforts of single forces.

An apparent union may be produced by none thinking at all, as well as by all thinking alike; but such an union, as Leighton observes, is not produced by the active heat of the spirit, but is a confusion rather arising from the want of it; not a fusing together, but a freezing together, as cold congregates all bodies how heterogeneous soever, sticks, stones, and water: but heat makes first a separation of different things, and then unites those that are of the same nature.

All bodies consist of infinitely small particles of matter, each of which possesses the power of attracting or drawing towards it, and uniting with any other particle sufficiently near to be within the influence of its attraction. But in minute particles this power extends to so very small a distance around them, that its effect is not sensible unless they are (or at least appear to be) in contact; it then makes them stick or adhere together, and is hence called the attraction of cohesion. So is it with the members of Christ's body, they must be brought into contact one with another, in order to unite cordially together. The graces of God's image in the soul possess but little power of attraction at a distance, we must come nigh to them if we would come within the influence of their attraction; they will only be recognised and felt in the communion of the saints.

The strength of a body will be generally in proportion as the particles of bodies are more closely united; for this reason, it is greater in solid bodies than in fluids. So union is strength, and the more closely the members are united one with another, the stronger will be the body both for warfare and defence.

The particles of air are not destitute of the power of attraction, but they are too far distant from each other to be influenced by it, and human effort has hitherto failed in the attempt to compress them, and bring them within the sphere of each other's attraction. In like manner, like these

particles of air, the various widely scattered members of Christ's body are not destitute of powers mutually to attract each other together in love, but they are too far distant from each other to experience the power of this attraction—it is the want of communion. But unlike these vain attempts to compress the particles of air in one, the Saviour, who prayed that they might be one, shall one day unite them in the bonds of perfect indivisibility in a new world of love.

Vows.

“Better it is that thou shouldest not vow, than that thou shouldest vow, and not pay.” Ecc. v. 5. God is mocked by an oath, and a covenant when it is not observed. A man that refuses to be listed does not meet with the like punishment as he that runs from his colours; so he that never came under the oath of God does not sin so much as he that has sworn to his covenant. That which is but simple fornication in the Gentiles—in Christians it is adultery—breach of vow.

We are commonly like Antigonus' sick soldier, that fought well because he looked to die, but grew a coward as soon as he was cured. We have need of the counsel which the Bishop of Colen gave the Emperor Sigismond, who asked him what he should do to be happy: “Live as you promised to do when you were last sick of the stone or gout.”

An infant (says an old law writer) being born to an estate of inheritance cannot actually take possession, but according to an ancient custom was carried to some part of the land in the nurse's or some other's arms, where the guardian of the child took livery and seisin for its use, and promises fealty to do such service as the premises were bound to; all which the heir (though but then an infant) was fully to make good when he comes to years of discretion. Thus in the sacrament of baptism, the child is conditionally received into the congregation of Christ's flock; but the godfathers and godmothers, answering to the stipulation of

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the church proposed unto them, and undertaking on the child's part, the child coming to years of understanding, is engaged to perform it, in as full a manner to all intents and purposes, as if it had been able to have answered for itself.

—SPENCER.

You may see a man intent in pursuing his schemes, whether of business or pleasure, continue, from time to time, to give bills and promissory notes, reckless of the day of payment—until at last ruin seizes her victim. So will it be with those who (forgetful, and reckless of their vows) continue to run into debt with God.

Watchfulness.

A believer's watchfulness is somewhat like that of a soldier on guard. A sentinel posted on the walls, when he discovers an hostile party advancing, does not attempt to make head against them himself; but informs his commanding officer of the enemy's approach, and leaves him to take the proper measures to repel the foe. So the Christian does not attempt to fight temptation in his own strength; his watchfulness lies in observing its approach, and in telling God of it by prayer.

Watchfulness against sin in a Christian is like watching lest a man cut his finger. Wise men do not often cut their fingers, yet every day they use a knife; and a man's eye is a tender thing, and everything can do it wrong, and everything can put it out; yet, because we love our eyes so well, in the midst of so many dangers, by God's providence, and a prudent natural care, by winking when anything comes against them, and by turning aside when a blow is offered, they are preserved so certainly that not one man in ten thousand does, by a stroke, lose one of his eyes in all his lifetime. If we would transplant our natural care to a spiritual caution, we might, by God's grace, be kept from losing our souls, as we are from losing our eyes; and because

a perpetual watchfulness is our great defence, and the perpetual presence of God's grace is our great security, and that this grace never leaves us unless we leave it, and the precept of a daily watchfulness is a thing not only so reasonable, but so many easy ways to be performed,—we see upon what terms we may be quit of our sins, and more than conquerors over all the enemies and impediments of salvation.

There are some musical instruments that seem to stand all weathers—nothing seems to derange them; there are others that alteration of weather sensibly affects; but there are some which are put out of tune by a breath of wind, and these must be kept with the greatest care. So we see some professors, who fearlessly brave all temptations, and feel no reluctance to encounter every rude shock; nothing seems to move them—good reason, when their consciences are hardened, and in a state of almost insensibility. There are others who, while they live unconscious of the thousand lesser evils of the inner man, yet show much feeling under a sore temptation, or the manifestation of an evil temper. There are a *few blessed ones* who shrink from the smallest contact with evil, with a conscience sensitive as the apple of the eye. How carefully do they guard themselves from every rough wind, and the breathings of infections around them! In proportion as they attain to spirituality of mind, there is a sensitiveness of conscience. In this case a wrong principle, a wrong word, yea, even a bad tone of voice, will occasion more grief than many of their erring brethren will feel for bad actions and palpable worldliness; and, oh! a close, careful walk with God is the only appointed means for keeping our instrument in proper tune.

It is but the act of common wisdom to be sober and vigilant, when we are exposed to dangers on every hand from the numerous temptations to sin, which lie so thick around us. To be thoughtless and indifferent here, is like one who should be careless how he steered his vessel, and secure as if he were in a safe sea, while shoals and rocks were around him, and the sea was strewn with wrecks. But especially must we direct our care to prevent our being surprised

against the sins that so easily encompass us, whereby we have been often foiled. If a besieged city has one part of the walls weaker, and more liable to be taken, care will be taken to strengthen it, and double the guards there.

The old principle still remains within, and if we be not constantly on our guard, it will regain its former ascendancy over us. A stronger army, if the sentinels fall asleep, may be surprised, and vanquished by troops that are far inferior. We, too, notwithstanding the power given us by the indwelling spirit, shall surely be overcome, if we are not constantly on our watch-tower.—“ Watch and pray.”

Sleep levels all; the wise man then is no wiser than a fool to project for his safety; nor the strong man better than the weak to defend himself: if slumber fall once upon the eye, it is night with thee, and thou art, though the best of saints, but as other men, *so far* as this sleep prevails on thee.

The Christian's work is too various to be done between sleeping and waking, and too important to be done ill, and slurred over, no matter how. He had need be awake that walks on the brink of a deep river, or a brow of a steep hill. The Christian's path is so narrow, and the danger is so great, that calls for both a minute eye to discern, and steady eye to direct; but a sleepy eye can do neither. Look upon any duty or grace, and you will find it lie between Scylla and Charybdis, two extremes alike dangerous.

Watchfulness is more needful for the christian soldier than any other, because other soldiers fight with men that need sleep as well as themselves; but the Christian's grand enemy Satan is ever awake, and walking his rounds, seeking whom he may surprise. And if Satan be always awake, it is dangerous for the Christian at any time to be spiritually asleep, that is, secure and careless.

Sometimes thou art not so wakeful to discover the encroachments of sin upon thee as formerly. At one time we find David's heart smote him, when he but rent the skirt of Saul's garment; at another time, when his eye glanced on Bathsheba, he takes no such notice of the snare Satan hath him in, and so is led from one sin to another; which plainly

shows that grace in him was heavy-eyed, and his heart not in so holy a frame as it had been. If an enemy come up to the gates, and the sentinel not so much as give a notice to the inhabitants of his approach, it shows he is off his guard—either asleep, or worse. If grace were awake, and conscience had not contracted some hardness, it would do its office.

Warfare.

Now the moral impotence in men to vanquish their lusts, though it will be no apology at the day of judgment, yet it will discourage them from making resistance: for who will attempt an impossibility? Despair of success relaxes the active powers, cuts the nerves of our endeavours, and blunts the edge of industry. 'Tis related of the West Indians, that upon the first incursion of the Spaniards into their country, they tamely yielded to their tyranny; for seeing them clad in armour which their spears could not pierce, they fancied them to be the children of the sun, invulnerable and immortal. But an Indian carrying a Spaniard over the water, resolved to try whether he were mortal, and plunged him into the river so long that he was drowned. From that experiment they took courage, and resolved to kill their enemies, who were capable of dying, and recover their dear liberty, lost by such a foolish conceit. Thus men will languish in a worse servitude, if they fancy the lusts of the flesh, their intimate enemies, to be inseparable. Fear congeals the spirits, and disables from noble enterprises, which hope persuades, and courage executes. Now we have an army of conquerors to encourage us in the spiritual war with the flesh, the world, and Satan, enemies in combination against us. How many saints have preserved themselves unspotted from the most alluring temptations! They were not statues, without sensible faculties, they were not without a conflict of carnal passions, but by the Holy Spirit sub-

dued them ; and though some obtained a clearer victory than others, yet all were victorious by divine grace.

To excite Christians to make serious and hopeful trials for the subduing the strongest corruptions, I will select two examples of the virtuous heathen, who restrained anger and lust, that are the most rebellious passions against the empire of the mind. Socrates by natural temper was choleric, yet he had so far reduced his passions under the command of reason, that upon any violent provocation his countenance was more placid and calm, his voice more temperate, and his words more obliging : thus by wise counsel and circumspection, he obtained a happy victory over himself. The other is of young Scipio, the Roman general in Spain, who, when a virgin of exquisite beauty was presented to him among other captives, religiously abstained from touching her, and restored her to the prince to whom she was espoused. How do such examples of the poor pagans, who, in the glimmerings of nature expressed such virtues, upbraid Christians who are servants to their corruptions in the light of divine revelation ! If by the practice of philosophy they kept themselves from the dominion of their carnal appetites, shall not Christians, by a supernatural aid, obtain a clearer victory over them ?

The Christian's armour must be complete, and that in a threefold respect. First he must be armed in every part, *cap-a-pie*, soul and body, the powers of the one, and the senses of the other, not any part left naked. A dart may fly in at a little hole, like that which brought a message of death to Ahab, through the joints of his harness. If all the man be armed, and only the eye left without, Satan can soon shoot his fire-balls of lust in at that loophole, which shall set the whole house on a flame. Eve looked but on the tree, and a poisonous dart struck her to the heart. If the eye be shut, and the ear be open to corrupt communication, Satan will soon assault at this hole ; if all the outward senses be guarded, and the heart not kept "with all diligence," we shall soar by our own thoughts, be betrayed into Satan's hands. Our enemies are on every side, and so must our armour be on the right hand and on the left.

(2 Cor. vi. 7.) The apostle calls sin an enemy that surrounds us. If there be any part of the line unguarded, or weakly provided, there Satan falls on ; we see the enemy often enter the city on one side, whilst he is beat back on the other, for want of care to keep the whole line. Satan divides his temptations into several squadrons—one he employs to assault here, another to storm there. We read of fleshly wickedness and spiritual wickedness : whilst thou repellst Satan tempting thee to fleshly wickedness, he may be entering the city at the other gate of spiritual wickedness. Perhaps thou hast kept thy integrity by the practical part of thy life, but what armour hast thou to defend thy head, thy judgment ? Thus we see what need we have of universal armour in regard of every part.

Anselm, Archbishop of Canterbury, as he was passing on the way, espied a boy with a bird tied in a string to a stone ; the bird was still taking wing to fly away, but the stone kept her down : the holy man made good use of this sight, and bursting out into tears, said, “ Even so it is betwixt the flesh and the spirit, the spirit is willing to mount upwards, in heavenly thoughts and contemplations, but the flesh keepeth it down, and, if possible, would not admit of the least thought of heaven.”—SPENCER.

A godly man cannot do that which he would. (Rom. vii. 18.) And herein he is like a prisoner that is got out of the gaol, who, that he might escape the hands of the keeper, desires and strives with all his heart to run a hundred miles in a day, but by reason of the heavy bolts and fetters that hang on his heels, cannot for his life creep past a mile or twain, and that too with chafing his flesh, and tormenting himself. And thus it is that the servants of God do heartily desire and endeavour to run in the ways of God's commandments, as it is said of that good king Josias, to serve God with all their heart. (2 Kings xxiii. 25.) Yet because they are clogged with the bolts of the flesh, they perform obedience very slowly and weakly, with many slips and failings.—IBID.

If we desire a gauge by which to ascertain the depths of our own Christianity, I would say it should be this—the

vigour and energy of the warfare in our soul. Dr. Owen beautifully remarks, "I should estimate a man's strength rather by the burden that he carries, than by the pace that he maintains."

The conflicts of the Christian, "the flesh lusting against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh," continue to the end of life, and may be compared to a conflagration which is opposed by engines where the supply of water is scarcely equal to the demand, and not incessantly followed up. Sometimes the fire yields to the well-directed stream, and at other times it breaks forth with renewed fury, and seems to defy the efforts of those who would arrest its progress.

Our condition is the state of a daily and dangerous warfare, and many inroads are made by sin, and much hurt is done, and booty carried off: for though in part mortified, although our dwelling be within the kingdom of grace, yet it is in the borders of it, and hath a dangerous neighbourhood. If we mean to be safe, we must remove into the heart of the land, or carry the war farther off.

Even the warfare which is wrought upon believers by their sins and imprudences, is not without its use; but the benefits derived from it are such as nature gains by the commotion of the elements in a storm, violent and destructive, though purifying: not like those which the earth receives from the fertilising and refreshing shower, or from the beams of the bright and genial sunshine of each warm and cloudless day.

WORLD.

What a diminutive figure would our earth make, if seen from the sun by eyes so constructed as ours! It would appear a million of times smaller than the sun now seems to us: it would be hardly, if at all, visible. Why is the sun no larger in our sight? Because of our extreme distance from it. The earth, why so large? Because we are resident

upon it. And wherefore, O my soul, are the glorious things of God, and the important concerns of futurity, no greater in thy view? Because the remains of original corruption will keep thee at too great a distance from thy Lord, and hinder thee from seeing eternal realities in the momentous light they deserve. Why do the perishing interests of time appear so great? Because we are immediately conversant with them, and they have naturally too deep a place in our vile affections. Milton represents the seraph Uriel as dwelling in the sun. Was this, in a spiritual sense, our case; were our hearts right with God, and could we constantly walk in the near, uninterrupted light of his blessed countenance, how would the world dwindle in our esteem; what a speck, what a comparative nothing would it appear!

A Christian, too conversant with people of the world, resembles a bright piece of plate too much exposed to the air; which, though in reality it continues plate still, yet grows tarnished, and loses its fine burnish, and needs a fresh cleansing and rubbing up.

Suppose that, in travelling through a wilderness, a spacious garden should burst upon your view, in the midst of which is a splendid palace. Upon entering it, you perceive in every apartment proofs of the agency of some living person, though you see none. Complicated machinery is moving, and various occupations are carried on; but still the agent who produces these effects is invisible. Would you be the less convinced that they were produced by some intelligent agent? Now you have the same proof of the existence of God in his works, that you would have in the case I have supposed, of the existence and presence of some invisible agent; and it is just as unreasonable to doubt of his existence, as it would be to doubt whether the palace had been built by any person, or was only the work of chance. Suppose you were informed, by a writing on the wall, that the palace was inhabited, or haunted by spirits who were constantly watching your conduct, and who had power to punish you, if it displeased them; and that you were also informed at the same time of the course of conduct which it would be necessary to pursue, in order to

obtain their approbation. How careful would you be to observe the rules, and how fearful of displeasing those powerful spirits ! And if you were further informed, that these were the spirits of your deceased parents, and that they were able to hear if you addressed them, how delightful it would be to go and tell them of your wants and sorrows, and feel sure that they listened to you with sympathy and compassion ! I tell you, this world is haunted, if I may so express it,—haunted by the eternal Spirit. He has given you rules by which to regulate your conduct, and is able to punish every deviation from them. And can you recollect that such a Being is constantly noticing your conduct, and still persist in disobeying his commands ? God is also your heavenly Father ; and why can you not go to him as such, with the same confidence which you would exercise towards an earthly parent ?

Men are apt to promise themselves much contentment in the fruition of earthly things, like the fool in the parable ; and to be herein disappointed is the ground of much vexation. When a man travels in a deep way, and sees before him a large smooth plain, he presumes that will recompense the toil he was formerly put to ; but when he comes to it, and finds it as rotten, as full of sloughs, and bogs, and quagmires, as his former way, his trouble is the more multiplied, because his hopes are deceived. Satan and the world beget in men's minds large hopes, and make profuse promises to those that will worship them ; and a man at a distance sees abundance of pleasure and happiness in riches, honours, high places, eminent employments, and the like : but when he hath his heart's desire, and peradventure hath outclimbed the very modesty of his former wishes, hath ventured to break through many a hedge, to make gaps through God's law, and his own conscience, that he might, by shorter passages, hasten to the idol he so much worshipped ; he finds at last, that there was more trouble in the fruition, than expectation at the distance ; that all this is but like the Egyptian temples, where, through a stately frontispiece and magnificent structure, a man came, with much preparation of reverence and wor-

ship, but to the image of an ugly ape, the ridiculous idol of the people. A man comes to the world, as to the lottery, with a head full of hopes and projects to get a prize; and returns with a heart full of blanks, utterly deluded in his expectation. The world useth a man as ivy doth an oak: the closer it gets to the heart, the more it clings and twists about the affections; though it seem to promise and flatter much, yet it doth indeed but eat out his real substance, and choke him in the embraces.

There are especially certain occasions when the current of the world hurries the man away, and he has lost the religious government of himself. When the pilot finds, on making the port of Messina, that the ship will not obey the helm, he knows that she is got within the influence of that attraction which will bury her in the whirlpool. We are to avoid the danger, rather than to oppose it. This is a great doctrine of Scripture. An active force against the world is not so much inculcated as a retreating, declining spirit. "Keep thyself unspotted from the world."

There is a thing that the Emperor Caligula is laughed at for in all stories. There was a mighty navy provided, well manned and victualled; and every day it was expected that the whole country of Greece should have been invaded, and so it might have been; but the emperor had another design in hand, and employed his soldiers to gather a quantity of cockle shells and pebble stones, and so returned home again. Just such another voyage do the most of men make here in this world, were the particulars but truly cast up. God hath given us so much time, he hath furnished us with that which may be a means to gain heaven itself: now if we lay out this little only about wife, children, or to purchase a little wealth, is not this to spend money for that which is not bread? to labour for that which satisfieth not? Is not this the greatest folly that can be?

There is a fable how that a wolf, being exceedingly hungry, came into a tanner's yard, and there espying raw hides in the pit, had a great mind to have eaten them, but being covered with water could not tell how to come at them; and at last he resolves to drink up the water, but

after a while he was so gorged that he had no mind at all to the hides. This is the case of all earthly-minded men, that being filled with the things of this world, they have no appetite to the things that are heavenly: having dined with all the dainties that earth can present, such as honours, riches, and the like, they have no relish to the supper of the Lamb Christ Jesus, "at whose right hand are pleasures for evermore."—SPENCER.

If some silly astrologer or fortune-teller do but hit in one thing of twenty, he is presently cried up for a cunning man; but let the physician work six hundred cures, yet, if through the impatience of his patient, he fail but in one, that one failure doth more turn to his discredit, than his many eminent cures did formerly get him praise. Thus doth the world deal with men in the matter of censure; if a worldly-minded man have but an outward gift of strength or of speech, or of any other natural or acquired endowment, he is accounted a precious man, a man of excellent parts, though he be at the same time an idolater, a profane person. But let the child of God be truly zealous for God, honest and holy in life and conversation; yet if there be but one infirmity in him, (as who is free?) or if he have through weakness fallen into one sin; that one infirmity against which he striveth, or that one sin for which he is grieved, shall drown all the graces in him, be they never so eminent, never so great, and the world is ready to give him up for a wicked man, a hypocrite, &c.—**IBID.**

At a time when the church was in virgin purity, and the renunciation of the pomps and vanities of the world, professed in the baptism of water, was maintained by a continual baptism in the fire of persecution, the enemy was then the world in arms, who is indeed readily discerned, provokes resistance, and compels a decision of character. But the enemy of later days has been the world in arts, and a cloak of profession, which insidiously allures and perplexes the resolution by its designing mixture of good and bad. So far from soldiers in the field, we are rather the people in assembly, among whom the devices, rather

than the armies of the enemy, are present. With what heedfulness in all our ways, and watchfulness in all our steps, should we walk ! What danger of being entangled by the wiles of a hollow Christianity, of undue compliances with enemies clothed in the garb of Christ's friends, of being corrupted from "the simplicity of Christ !" In persecution it requires little foresight to discover the pointed sword. But in a smiling world it is the office of deep skill, of one who has his senses exercised to discern good and evil, to detect the drugged bowl.

What need of sound wisdom to be called into continual use by the believer ! Men do not live at ease or unconcerned in time of danger as at other times, and "a world that lieth in wickedness" is beset with dangers to the godly, and calls for the wisdom of the serpent in intercourse with it. The Scriptures describe it as full of uncleanness and defilement, disease, and evil communications. Let an epidemic disease be raging in the neighbourhood, infectious and fatal in its effects, what would a physician do in such a case ? he would go among the infected from a sense of duty ; his compassion would rouse him to efforts to do them good. But he would not domesticate with them and make them his companions, nor stay with them from choice ; on the contrary, when he had satisfied the claims of duty, and their necessities, he would be in haste to be gone. A consciousness of danger would be ever present with him, and he would act accordingly. Both before and after his visit, as well as during his intercourse with them, he would use all proper means to preserve himself from the contagion which he has reason to apprehend. And how is it the Lord's people whom he "hath chosen out of the world" often pursue an opposite line of conduct ? Alas ! "the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light." As they would flee from danger, and avoid infection, "let them enter not into the path of the wicked, and go not in the way of evil men ;" but in reference to all who would divert them from the path of duty, or impede in any way their spiritual progress, the command is plain, "Come out

from among them, and be separate, and touch not the unclean thing."

The ocean presents a beautiful picture of the world, and what is passing there. View it at certain seasons, and what can appear more tempting and inviting? But under the smiling and deceitful surface, how often are there concealed dangerous rocks and quicksands, on which the unskilful mariner will strike and be lost! The sea also, as well as the world in general, exhibits the mark of that curse under which the whole creation groaneth and travaileth. It abounds with creatures pursuing and devouring each other; the small and the great becoming a prey to the weak and powerful; while in both there is a great destroyer—a leviathan taking his pastime, and seeking the perdition of all. View the sea also, when agitated by winds, and then how fitly does its commotion represent the restlessness and fury of godless men, impelled hither and thither by the breath of their wild and ungovernable passions to destruction! But let us bless God that he has not left man to chance, or his own skill in crossing the great ocean of human life. If the mariner has his compass, the Christian has his bible. If the one has his pilot, the other also has his guide and Saviour.—LIGHT FROM THE WEST.

The power of worldliness, though it works silently and unperceived, yet it is no less certain in its operations. Like some more open vices, it may not startle and confound the soul of its victim with a sense of guilt; yet quiet, and equable, like an ever-flowing stream it gradually wears his soul into one channel, and drains off his thoughts and affections from higher ground, carrying all forward with a steady current in that single direction; while his religious impressions, like a side-wind agitating for a moment the face of the stream, only ripple its surface, and subside, without in the least retarding its onward course.

"Come out from among them," &c. The simile of the man saved from drowning is apposite. Such a person would strain every nerve to aim the rope, to guide the plank, to row the life-boat towards the less favoured comrades; but no one would expect him to cast himself anew amid the

devouring waves whence he has been just drawn ashore. No : he would use his own rescue as a means of stimulating their efforts to escape also ; but for that very purpose he would exhibit himself as altogether delivered—not as again floundering among them in the waters.

You may see a field of corn, yet full of fine showy poppies ; if you turn some children into it, you will see them rush to the poppies, and altogether overlook the corn, and take no notice of it. Now this is the conduct of the men of the world—like the children, they are all eagerly in quest of the poppies, the glittering baubles and trifles of this life, while they are overlooking the wheat, the solid grains of eternity ;—the fruit, which, if gathered into the garner, would endure unto eternal life.

To be always in the tumult of the world, or the society of others, is full of danger ; retirement is necessary. We know that the commons are usually more barren and fruitless than the enclosures, and the fruit tree that groweth by the highway side shall have many a stone thrown at it, and many a danger which those that are in your orchard escape.

This world is like a vast mausoleum, a charnel-house, a valley of dry bones : among all its followers and votaries there is no breast heaves, no heart that feels, no voice that speaks,—all is the darkness and solitude of the grave. But Christ came to impart spiritual life.

It is said of Honorius, a Roman emperor, that when one told him that Rome was lost, he was exceedingly grieved, and cried out, Alas, alas ! for he supposed it was his hen so called, which he exceedingly loved ; but when it was told him, it was his imperial city of Rome, that was besieged by Alaricus, and was taken, and all the citizens rifled, and made a prey to the rude enraged soldier, then his spirits were revived, that his loss was not so great as he imagined. Can it be otherwise thought, but that this disposition of Honorius was most weak and childish ? Yet the most of men are under the same condemnation, as being too much affected with the loss of a poor silly hen, with the deprivation of things temporal, nothing at all minding the want of those

which are spiritual: if they lose a little wealth, the least punctilio of honour, a little pleasure, a little vanity, things of themselves good for nothing, because of themselves they can make nothing good, yet for these things they will vex and fret, weep and wail; but when they see their precious soul's deserts for sin, and God's wrath for sin; when they are rifled, and stripped naked of grace, not having the breastplate of Christ's righteousness to cover them, then, with the Israelites, "they sit down to eat and drink, and rise up to play." So foolish are they, and ignorant, even as the beast which perisheth." Psalm xlix. 20.—SPENCER.

It was the custom, when an heir was impleaded for an idiot, the judge commanded an apple or a counter, with a piece of gold, to be set before him, to try which he would take; if he took the apple or the counter, and not the gold, then he was cast for a fool, and so held by the judgment of the court, as one that was unable to manage his estate, because he did not know the value of things, or how to make a true election of what is fittest for him in the way of subsistency. This is the case of all wicked men, thus foolish, and much more; when bugles and diamonds, counters and gold, are before them, they leave the diamonds and the gold, and please themselves with toys and baubles: nay, when heaven and destruction, life and death, are set before them, they choose destruction rather than heaven, and death rather than life; they take the mean, transitory, trifling things of the world, before the favour of God, the pardon of sin, a part in Jesus Christ, and an inheritance amongst the saints in light celestial.—IBID.

As a cup of pleasant wine offered to a condemned man in the way to his execution; as the feast of him who sat under a naked sword, hanging perpendicularly over his head by a slender thread; as Adam's forbidden fruit, seconded by a flaming sword; as Belshazzar's dainties overlooked by a handwriting against the wall; such are all empty delights of the world; in their matter and expectation, earthly; in their acquisition painful; in their fruition nauseous and cloying; in their duration dying and perishing; in their operation hardening, effeminating, leavening, puffing up, estranging

the heart from God ; in their consequences seconded with anxiety, solicitude, fear, sorrow, despair, disappointment ; in their measure shorter than that a man can stretch himself on, narrower than that a man can wrap himself in ; every way defective and disproportionable to the vast and spacious capacity of the soul of man, as unable to fill that, as the light of a candle to give day to the whole world ; nothing but emptiness attends them all, unless they be found in Christ Jesus.—IBID.

It is observed by the mythologists, that Pleasure went on an occasion to bathe herself, and having stripped off her clothes, laid them on the water-side ; but Sorrow having hid herself in the covert as unseen, steals the clothes away, puts them on, and so departs ; hence it comes to pass, that multitudes in the world are at a great loss, they run and ride, court and woo pleasures which they have no sooner obtained, but they perceive their error, and acknowledge their mistake. It is nothing else but Sorrow in Pleasure's clothes ; the pleasures of the world are bitter sweets at the best ; God only is true happiness, at his right hand are true pleasures for evermore.—IBID.

Youth.

Sin groweth stronger by custom, and more rooted ; it gathereth strength by the very act. A brand that hath been in the fire is more apt to take fire again. A man in the dropsy, the more he drinks, the more his thirst increaseth. Every act lesseneth fear, and strengtheneth inclination. Jer. xiii. 27. "Wo unto thee, O Jerusalem, wilt thou not be made clean ? when shall it once be ?" A twig is easily bowed ; but when it grows, when long rooted, not so easily. The man that was possessed of a devil from his childhood, how hardly is he cured ! Mark ix. 29. Justice is provoked the longer, and that will be a grief to you first or last. If ever we be brought home to God, it will cost us many a bitter tear ; not only at first conversion, (Jer. xxxi. 18,) "I

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have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus: thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised," &c., but afterwards: David, though he began with God betimes, (Psalm xxv. 7,) yet prays, "Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions." And Job xiii. 26, "For thou writest bitter things against me, and makest me to possess the iniquities of my youth." Old bruises may trouble us long after upon every change of weather; and new afflictions revive the sense of old sins. They may stick by us. We think tricks of youth are not to be stood upon; you may have a bitter sense of them to your dying day. You will every day grow more useless to God: the exercise of religion depends much on the vigour of the affections. Again, it is very profitable, it brings a great deal of honour to God, to begin with him betimes. All time is little enough to declare your respects to God. And it is honourable for you. Seniority in grace is a preferment; "They were in Christ before me," saith Paul. An old disciple is a title of honour. To grow gray in Christ's service, and to know him long, it maketh the work of grace more easy. The dedication of the first fruits sanctified the whole lump. (Lam. iii. 27.) "It is good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth," to be inured to strictness betimes. Dispositions only when cultivated in youth increase with us, and attain their true growth and beauty.

The ancients painted a young man stark naked, his eyes veiled, his right hand bound behind him, and his left hand left at liberty, and Time following him close at the heels, and ever and anon pulling a thread out of the veil. He was so drawn in a naked posture, to show with what little secrecy he had used his delights and pleasures; with his right hand bound behind him, to express that he did not do anything right; his left hand free, and at liberty, signifying that he doth do all things awkwardly, and untowardly. He was portrayed blind, because he doth not see his own follies; but Time behind him, opening his eyes by little and little, so bringing him to a knowledge of his errors, and that if he go on in such a course of life he is no other than as a broken ship which leaks and draws in water at a thousand places,

and will not be long ere it sink : as a house, whereinto the rain doth fall, and drop in so fast, and at so many places that it must speedily fall without recovery.—SPENCER.

The importance of early piety is rarely estimated. Youth is the spring of life, and by this will be determined the glory of the summer, the abundance of autumn, and the provision of winter. It is the morning of life, and if the Sun of Righteousness does not dispel the moral mists and fogs before noon, the whole day generally remains overspread and gloomy. It is the seed-time, and “ what a man soweth that shall he reap.” Everything of importance is affected by religion in this period of life.

Zeal.

There is a story in Pliny, how two goats meeting on a bridge, they did not make way against each other, but made way one for the other. The one, lying down, suffered the other to pass over his back, and so both escaped the danger of the ditch. And in the time of the Gothish wars, it may be read, that a Roman soldier and a barbarian, casually falling into the same pit as they marched along the country, were so far from contending with each other, as that they both agreed mutually to relieve each other, and so, necessity making them friends, they were both drawn out of the pit and delivered. It were to be wished that party-spirited Christians would give up their contentious zeal, and yield in all matters which are not fundamental for the common good, and that church of Christ of which they are the several members. Had they so much wit as the goat, or else so much good will as the Goth, they would not make a tenacious spirit, and a want of forbearance a point of devotion. If their zeal were but half so good for the gospel, as Mary's was to the law, at the time of the purification, they would rather wrong themselves in the particular, than wrong the church in general.—SPENCER.

Phaeton, in the poet, takes upon him to draw the chariot of the sun, but through his inconsiderate rashness sets the world in a combustion. What a horse is without a rider, or

a hot-spurred rider without an eye, a ship in a high wind and swelling sea without a rudder; such is zeal without knowledge. Knowledge is the eye of the rider that chooseth the best way; the bridle in the hand to moderate the pace; the rudder in the ship whereby it is steered safely. St. Bernard hits full on this point. Discretion without zeal is slow-paced; and zeal without discretion is strong-headed; let therefore zeal spur on discretion, and discretion rein in zeal.—IBID.

Dogs seldom bark at a man that ambles a softly fair pace, but if he once sets spurs to his horse and fall galloping, (though his errand be of importance, and to the court perhaps,) then they bark at, and fly at him; and thus they do at the moon, not so much because she shines, for that they often see, but because, by reason of the clouds hurried under by the winds, she seems to run faster than ordinary. And thus if any man do but pluck up his spirits in God's service, and run the ways of his commandments, it is Jehu's furious march presently, and he shall meet with many a scoff by the way, that runneth with more speed than ordinary.—IBID.

False zeal is uncertain, and mortal: it must be fanned by the gale of adventitious circumstances; it is merely occasional; it intermits; it is a meteor which streams through the sky with momentary beauty; now it sparkles, now it expires. Not so pure and undefiled zeal: this is permanent; kindled by the breath of the Almighty, it shines like the glory of the day, and is destined to shine when that glory is turned into gloom;—destined to soar above pyramids, and hills, and clouds, and stars;—destined to survive the catastrophe of the earth, and the visible heavens, and then to mingle with the flames of devotion, which blaze eternally around the throne of God.

A Christian's zeal is not partial, but universal; it "affects us always," not as a feverish, but a vital heat; not as a meteor, but as the sun.

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